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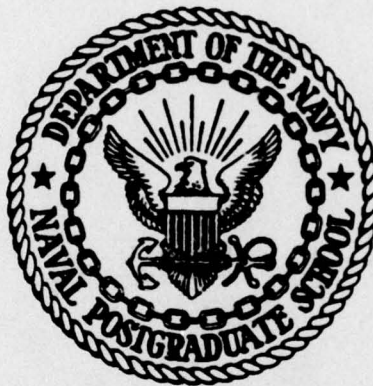


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CONFLICT AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS.

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Thesis Advisor:

B. M. Schutz

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The Horn of Africa has, does, and will in the future play an active and crucial political role, not only in Africa, but in the international system. This research is an attempt to provide policy makers with a perspective in planning for that future. ↗

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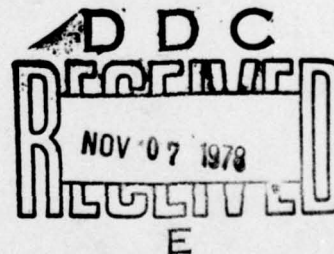
Michael Milan Ferguson  
Captain, United States Army  
B.S., The University of the State of New York, 1976

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Author

*Michael Milan Ferguson*

Approved by:

*BM Schuss*

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### ABSTRACT

There have been few attempts to combine the historical social, and political variables which make up the regional system that is the Horn of Africa. This work presents an encapsulated analysis that attempts to provide a "complete picture" of the attitudes, events and external intrusions which contribute to the situation as it exists today.

The Horn of Africa is viewed from four perspectives: (1) internal aspects, (2) regional linkages, (3) external influences, and (4) an historical interpretation. These four viewpoints are integrated to form strategic considerations and conclusions regarding the region and the potential areas of conflict or cooperation between the involved actors during the next decade.

The Horn of Africa has, does, and will in the future play an active and crucial political role, not only in Africa, but in the international system. This research is an attempt to provide policy makers with a perspective in planning for that future.



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No acknowledgement would be complete without commenting on the enormous contribution made by my wife Denise. She did not read or comment on anything herein, but without her support and consideration in all matters I would accomplish nothing.

Sheer numbers and in some cases considerations for the personal safety of those Africans whom I was privileged to know during my stay in Ethiopia preclude my mentioning them all. However, it is with deep respect and a profound sense of loss that I dedicate this work to Captain Eyasu Zego, Infantry, Ethiopian Army, an Eritrean, who died for his country near Harar in May 1977.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Geography is the force which has caused international concern with the Horn of Africa. Because of their location, the countries which make up the Horn are involved in the political realities of the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, (including the Persian Gulf), and, of course, Africa. Oil from Iran to Israel and Europe, and the renewed flow of commerce between East Africa, Asia, and the Gulf must pass near the Somali coast, through the Straits of the Bab-el-Mandib, and along the coast of Ethiopia and Eritrea en route to the Suez Canal. Naturally, the ability to monitor the traffic and to conduct military operations against targets on the sea lanes from coastal ports and airfields on the Horn has occupied the minds of many strategists. Not surprisingly, these capabilities have been the genesis of much of the external involvement in the area. Of equal, if not greater, importance is the significance of the Horn as a "spring-board" into central and southern Africa, the oil rich Arabian Peninsula and the sensitive areas of Sudan and Egypt.

The events of 1977 have resulted in a need to reevaluate critically long standing notions about the Horn. The continuing conflict between the two principal regional actors (Ethiopia and Somalia) and the impending escalation of events in Eritrea have impacted not only on United States policy

and strategies in the region, but have resulted in grave concern in bordering states where the United States has vital interests.

The complete renversement of the Ethiopians and Somalis and the introduction of Soviet and Cuban military forces and hardware has attracted the interests of the Arab and African Worlds. This introduction of additional actors and the concomitant conflict between previously clear interests and strategies creates a situation of potential great danger for stability in a region contiguous with the already super-critical Middle East.

Most studies relative to the Horn, its actors and their relationships with the rest of the world tend to fall into three categories -- pure history, social anthropology, and political science. This statement is probably true of studies done on any region or state and of itself is unremarkable, yet a closer examination of the work on the Horn reveals a major shortcoming. The fact is that although a good many excellent books have been written about each of these aspects with regard to the Horn, there have been few attempts to weave together all three aspects in order to obtain a complete picture. The historian tends to report events and usually stops at 1960; the sociologist or social anthropologist usually looks at a small section of the region without much regard for the remainder; and most political analysts seem to think that the Horn of Africa emerged from the ocean in 1945.

The possible exception to the rule is Richard Greenfield, whose work, Ethiopia - A New Political History,<sup>1</sup> has become a classic. Greenfield also seemed to feel a need for a new approach in analyzing the major political entity on the Horn:

"Ethiopia is an ancient country and no attempt to understand its complicated internal politics and the motivations of the several groups and interests involved could even begin without some examination of their roots which, since Ethiopia was not affected by the colonial era in the same way as the rest of Africa, extend far back into the history and mythology of that land. For this reason the emphasis of this book are bound to differ from those adopted in studies of other African nations."<sup>2</sup>

Greenfield was speaking about Ethiopia but with a few word substitutions he could have been describing the entire Horn of Africa. His analysis stopped as of 1960 but it is in that spirit that this work is attempted.

#### A. SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature relating to the Horn of Africa reveals that there are many useful works which examine individual countries but only a few which treat the region as a whole. Of the latter Dr. Tom J. Farer's Warclouds on the Horn of Africa<sup>3</sup> is the most recent and probably the best

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<sup>1</sup>Greenfield, Richard, Ethiopia - A New Political History, Praeger Publishers, 1965.

<sup>2</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>Farer, Tom J., Warclouds on the Horn of Africa, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1976. See elaboration of this critique in Chapter IV.



of an unexceptional series of English language works. This book, written before the Somali-Ethiopian conflict, examines the Horn from a geopolitical perspective in an attempt to develop policy recommendations. While Dr. Farer's analysis was excellent, his conclusions that the United States would support the Ethiopians and the Soviet Union the Somalis in a contest for the Horn, were considerably off the mark.

A plethora of works have been published on Ethiopia with the principal ones of general value being: Greenfield, discussed above, Edward Ullendorff's The Ethiopians,<sup>4</sup> and Richard Pankhurst's extremely detailed Economic History of Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup> Ullendorff's contribution is another classic, an extremely readable social-anthropological look at Ethiopia. Unfortunately he does not apply his considerable talent to any examination whatsoever of political and social problems. Pankhurst's volume is a compendium of facts, primarily economic data but including a number of social and historical insights, about Ethiopia up to 1935. He also includes some data on Somalia and the Horn in general. This work is invaluable as a source for any serious examination of the Horn. Narrower in scope but still of significant value are Sergew Hable Sellassie's Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to

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<sup>4</sup>Ullendorff, Edward, The Ethiopians, Oxford University Press, 1965.

<sup>5</sup>Pankhurst, Richard, Economic History of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968.



1270<sup>6</sup> which is an extremely well researched work and probably the definitive study of a rather obscure yet very important period on the Horn; Wax and Gold<sup>7</sup> by Donald M. Levine, an examination of Amhara culture and tradition which provides tremendous insight into the forces which have moulded the Ethiopians into the people they are today; and Ernest W. Lefever's important book Spear and Scepter<sup>8</sup> an examination of the role of the army, police and politics of Ethiopia through mid 1970.

The leading authority on Somalia is I.M. Lewis whose books A Pastoral Democracy<sup>9</sup> and A Modern History of Somaliland<sup>10</sup> and numerous articles have developed the idea of Somali "nationhood." He is well supplemented by Saadia Touval, Somali Nationalism<sup>11</sup> and John Drysdale's definitive The Somali Dispute.<sup>12</sup> Both Touval and Drysdale examine in depth the formation of Somali irredentism and the continuing border disputes between Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

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<sup>6</sup>Sellassie, Sergew Hable, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270, Haile Selassie I University Press, 1972.

<sup>7</sup>Levine, Donald M., Wax and Gold, University of Chicago Press, 1965.

<sup>8</sup>Lefever, Ernest W., Spear and Scepter, the Brookings Institution, 1970.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis, I.M., A Pastoral Democracy, Oxford University Press, 1961.

<sup>10</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, A Modern History of Somaliland, Praeger Publishers, 1965.

<sup>11</sup>Touval, Sasdia, Somali Nationalism, Harvard University Press, 1963.

<sup>12</sup>Drysdale, John, The Somali Dispute, Praeger Publishers, 1964.

At this point the contribution of Irving Kaplan, et al at the Foreign Area Studies Directorate of The American University must be mentioned. Their series of handbooks which compile basic facts about the social, economic, political and military institutions and practices of selected countries include The Area Handbook for Ethiopia<sup>13</sup> and The Area Handbook for Somalia.<sup>14</sup> Although no attempt is made to analyze the enormous amount of data contained in these works, they remain extremely useful as sources for any student of the Horn.

Eritrea and Djibouti are surprisingly ignored as objects of serious scholarly attention. G.K.N. Trevaskis has done an extremely capable and serious job of examining Eritrea and the roots of its secessionist drives in his well known Eritrea - A Colony in Transition,<sup>15</sup> albeit the majority of the work deals with the British trusteeship. Adloff and Thompson's Djibouti and the Horn of Africa<sup>16</sup> is somewhat dated but represents the best English language effort on documenting the former French territory. It must be pointed

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<sup>13</sup>Kaplan, Irving, et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, Government Printing Office, 1971.

<sup>14</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. Area Handbook for Somalia, Government Printing Office, 1977.

<sup>15</sup>Trevaskis, G.K.N., Eritrea - A Colony in Transition, Oxford University Press, 1960.

<sup>16</sup>Thompson, Virginia and Adloff, Richard, Djibouti and the Horn of Africa, Stanford University Press, 1968.

out, however, that virtually every author who writes on Ethiopia or Somalia discusses, to a greater or lesser degree, the historical, social and political aspects of Djibouti and Eritrea.

#### B. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

As related above, there have been few attempts to combine the historical, social, and political variables which make up the regional system that is the Horn of Africa. This effort is an attempt to present an encapsulated analysis that will provide a "complete picture" of the attitudes, events and external intrusions which have contributed to the situation as it exists today. Given the constraints of time and space this study will focus on the following questions:

1. What are the origins of the Somali and Eritrean disputes on the Horn and what are the salient factors in the continuing hostilities?
2. What are the interests and policy objectives of the actors and what is the impact of regionally involved external actors?
3. What areas of possible conflict and cooperation between the involved actors and what strategic considerations can be derived from them for the next decade?

#### C. METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

The main focus of this paper is upon internal trends in Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea; and upon the impact and



influence of external powers whose intrusion into the essentially bipolar region of the Horn has tended to exacerbate already extant prejudices and accelerate the forces of change and fissiparous tendencies.

Initially, an historical analysis will be used to enable the reader to identify salient variables in the relationship among the actors and the effects of primordialism and change on the regional actors through 1945. From this point the author shall undertake more detailed analysis of events since 1945 from a foreign policy perspective. This analysis will emphasize the emergence of distinct objectives and interests among the regional actors. An evaluation of the interests and objectives of the external actors will then be made in an attempt to identify areas of potential conflict or cooperation. Finally, conclusions and recommendations, as appropriate, will be offered.

Threaded throughout the discussion will be observations on the impact of technology and situational factors on the cultures of the Horn. Much of this study will be influenced by personal observations and experiences of the author while assigned to the Defense Attache's Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from August 1976 to June 1977. During that time the author was fortunate to travel extensively in Ethiopia and spent a number of days in Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya and Sudan. Although unable to travel to Somalia he did have the opportunity



to discuss that country with members of the Diplomatic Corps (both United States and other country representatives) who served or visited there.

The Horn of Africa has, does, and will in the future, play an active and crucial political role, not only in Africa, but in the international system. It is hoped that this work can in some small measure provide policy makers with a perspective in planning for that future.

## II. THE REGION, ITS PEOPLE, AND EARLY HISTORY

### A. THE REGION

The Horn enjoys a special status on the continent of Africa. It is neither North African with an Arab/Mediterranean orientation, Middle Eastern with its Hellenic influences, nor is it "Black African" with the great struggles for independence from colonial rule. It is a region which has absorbed aspects of culture, religion, historical experience, language and values from all three contiguous areas, and from Europe and Asia as well.

"In its long history the (Horn of Africa) has always formed a bridge between Africa and Asia...(and) has always occupied a favored place at a crossroads of civilization and a meeting point of many races."<sup>17</sup>

The political subdivisions on the Horn include all or parts of the states of Ethiopia (including Eritrea), the Somali Democratic Republic (Somalia), Kenya, and Djibouti (until recently the French Territory of Afars and Issas). Each of these actors will be discussed in some detail in the chapters which follow.

The physical geography of the region is a microcosm of the topography of Africa. Nearly as large as western Europe, the Horn is a "vast spearhead" which juts out into

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<sup>17</sup>Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 23.

the Indian Ocean forming the southern shore of the Gulf of Aden (see Map 1, p. 20). The major physical feature on the Horn is the Ethiopian Massif which rises to altitudes of 15,000 feet in the north central part of Ethiopia. The plateau, as these rugged mountains are sometimes called, is bifurcated by the Great Rift Valley which splits the Horn roughly in two. These two disruptions of the earth's surface have made the central portions of the Horn one of the most isolated and least known spots in Africa.

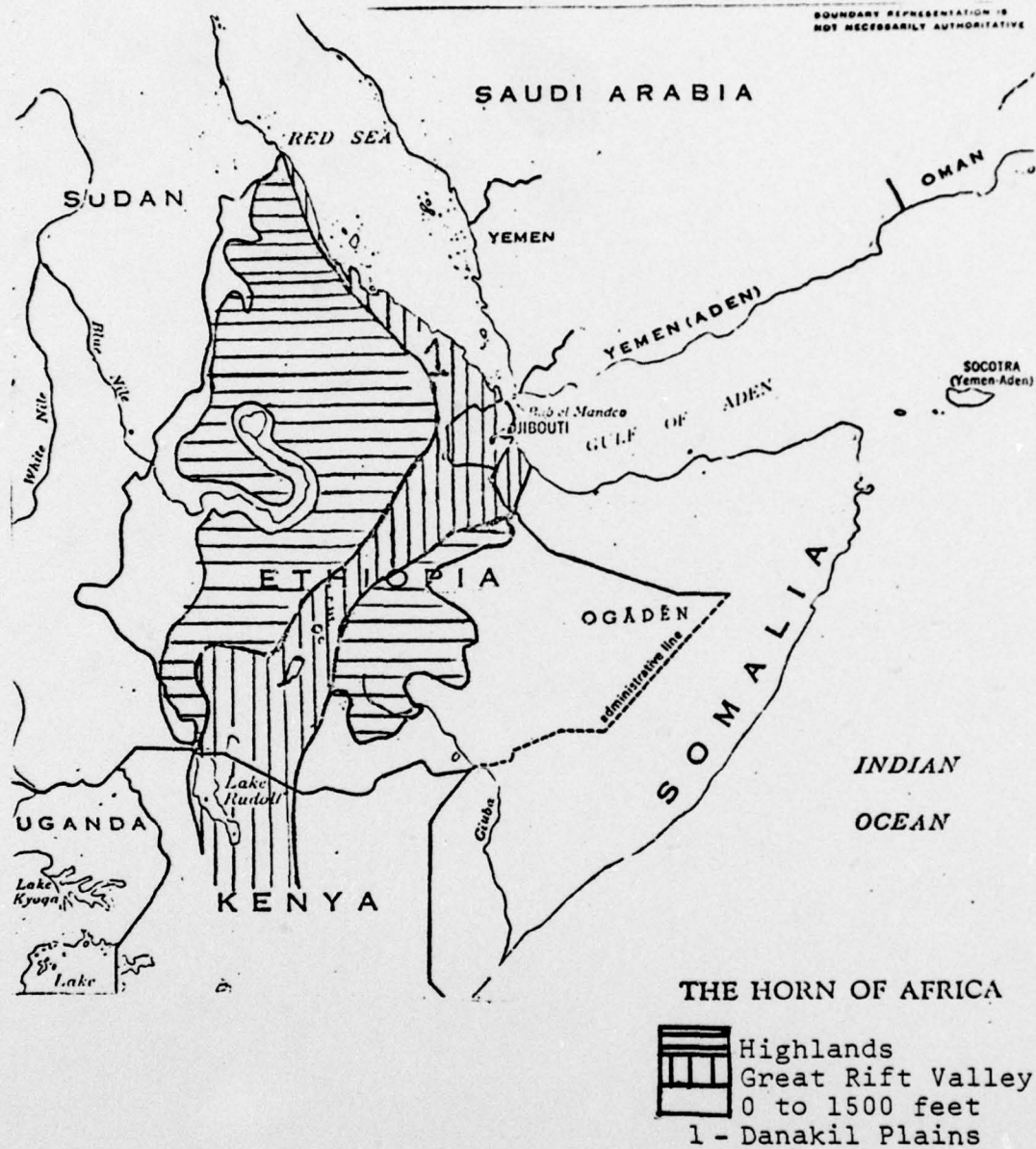
The northern mouth of the Great Rift Valley contains the Danakil Plains. This stretch of desert runs along the coast of the Red Sea and at points drops 381 feet below sea level. Less than forty miles away and paralleling this arid plain are the mountains of the northern half of the Massif, the Amhara Plateau, which rise to 6,700 feet. The citadel effect of this escarpment is well known and often referred to as a reason for the survival of the Ethiopian Empire.<sup>18</sup> To the west the Massif falls off in a series of terraces and canyons down to the Sudanese plain. The gorge of the Blue Nile winds its spectacular way through this broken country to Khartoum.<sup>19</sup> On the east

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<sup>18</sup>Hess, Robert L., Ethiopia: The Modernization of Autocracy, p. 7, Cornell University Press, 1970.

<sup>19</sup>For a graphic discription of the Blue Nile Gorge see Moorehead, Alan, The Blue Nile, pp. 9-20, New English Library, 1974. The author can attest to his accuracy by personal experience during several visits to the gorge in 1976-77.





MAP 1 - Physical Features

Adapted from Lipskey, Ethiopia,  
p. 29 and, Hess, Ethiopia, p.3.

and south the descent from the southern plateau is not so precipitous as it slides rather gradually down to from the Somali Plateau. This is a region of typical African veld, a hot arid bushland which traditionally has been barely able to support the livestock of the nomadic herders that cross it in a never ending search for water and graze. Scattered throughout the Horn are concentrations of dense tropical jungle and forested areas.

Temperature and vegetation are used by the inhabitants to designate climactic zones. For example, the daga refers to the "cold" zone where the region is alpine in nature; averages 8,000 feet above sea level; and the maximum temperatures seldom exceed 60 degrees in the hottest months. The temperate zone is called waynā dega. Temperatures average about 70 degrees and it is in this zone that the richest agricultural areas are found. The k'olla includes the veld, desert and bad lands. Its literal translation is "hot" and Somalia falls within this zone in its entirety.

In short, the physical geography of the Horn of Africa contains representative examples of virtually every type of climatological and geographic phenomena found elsewhere in Africa, with the exception of permanent snowfields in the high peaks.

## B. THE PEOPLE

Just as the topography and climate of the Horn is varied, so too are its peoples. As each of the regional actors is

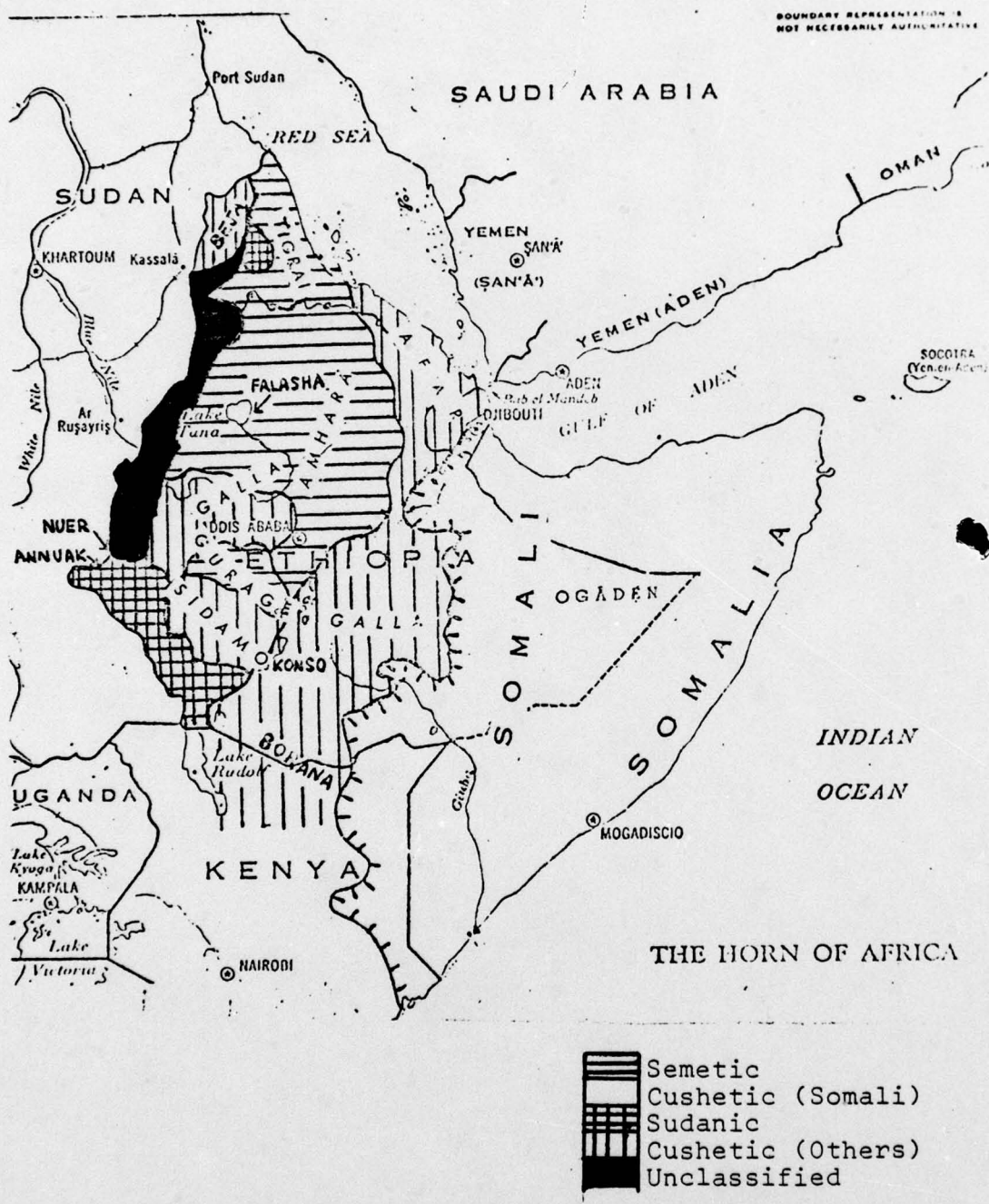
discussed in the pages that follow, ethnic and linguistic differences will become apparent. In Ethiopia alone, over seventy languages and two hundred dialects are spoken and there are at least nine major ethnic groups.<sup>20</sup> An examination of these plus the Somali, Masai, Kikuyu and all the other lesser groups which inhabit the region of the Horn would occupy many more pages than are available in a study of this nature. Map 2, p. 23 provides some idea of the population pattern on the Horn.

Generally two major types of people predominate, the cultivator of the highlands and the nomadic herdsman of the low plains. The former category includes the descendants of a Semetic people which invaded the Horn from the Arabian Peninsula around 1,000 B.C. The Amhara and Tigre elites of Ethiopia are the representative type of this group. The Somali tribes, on the other hand, typify the nomadic warrior of the savanna and desert. Situated between the two and intermingled to some extent are the largest single ethnic group on the Horn, the Galla (Oromo) peoples. This "group in the middle" are the descendants of purely African groups which moved into the Horn some four hundred years ago. Originally probably nomadic, they have tended to adopt the lifestyle of the region they inhabit and therefore are divided between a nomadic and settled existence.

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<sup>20</sup> Lipsky, George A., Ethiopia: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture, p. 34, Hraf Press, 1962.





MAP 2 - Linguistic Groups

Adapted from: Hess,  
Ethiopia, p. 15.

A similar dichotomy exists in Sudan where the northern tribes, Arabacised descendants of the Nubians of old, and the southern groups, a mixture of several hundred black African tribes who still remember the depredations of Arab and Abyssinian slave raiders.

In addition to classification by means of subsistence, the people of the Horn can be categorized by religion. The cultivator/warrior of the highland tends to hold to the rite of the Ethiopian Coptic Church and sees himself as the defender of "a Christian island in a Moslem sea." The roving nomad found Islam to be the religion best suited to his needs and throughout history has followed the call of  Jihad  for the conversion of the pagan and Christian elements. Finally, among the Galla and small scattered ethnic groups can be found large number of Pagans and the rapidly diminishing group of Falasha Jews. Moreover, it should be noted that each ethnic group has its own religious minority, i.e. there are nomadic Christians and Moslem farmers, but as a general rule the classification holds true.

In any event, throughout its history the factors of ethnicity, geography, culture, and religion have generated conflict and instability on the Horn.

### C. EARLY HISTORY

#### 1. In the Beginning

In the year 725 B.C. the ancient kingdom of Meroe was at the height of its power. Kush, as this kingdom was

also known, stretched from Egypt to Uganda and her trade routes crossed what is now Ethiopia to Punt (Somalia) and Saba (the Arabian Peninsula).<sup>21</sup>

At about this time, Semetic peoples from the region of Yemen began to migrate to the Horn. Through intermarriage and conquest they merged with the indigenous peoples and a new culture began to develop. Its center was the city of Axum, directly astride the trade routes to the east. After establishing a major port at Adulis, on the Red Sea coast, Axum developed contacts with Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Arabian and Indian cultures.<sup>22</sup> Axumite armies, in the meantime, ranged far over northern Ethiopia and into Sudan and Egypt. They destroyed the city of Meroe and conquered a large portion of southern Arabia.<sup>23</sup>

Axum reached her zenith as a world power in the first century A.D. but played a significant role in the region until the rise of Islam in the seventh century. In the year 330 A.D. the Axumite King, Ezana, adopted Christianity and contacts were established with the Byzantines.

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<sup>21</sup>See Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval History, especially chapters I and II for an outstanding treatment of pre-Axumite and pre-Christian history and culture on the Horn.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-86

<sup>23</sup>Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 54.



The first Bishop of Axum, Frumentus, laid the foundation for the Ethiopian Church which was to play such an important role in future events on the Horn.<sup>24</sup>

Its decline saw the Axumite Empire fragment into regions controlled by petty warlords or kings, whose power extended only so far as their spears would reach. Axum's legacy, then, was the framework for the feudal/Christian culture that typified Ethiopia until 1974.

The decline of the Axumites coincided with the advent of Islam on the Horn. The effect of the spread of Islam was to cut off the Ethiopian highlands from the rest of the world. It has been said that Axum was spared the Jihad because of the provision of sanctuary to the followers of Mohammed who had fled persecution in Mecca.<sup>25</sup> A more probable reason was the formidable terrain and the Axumite soldier. At any rate, early incursions by the Arabs were slaving expeditions into the Beja country to the north and the Somali regions in the south, and along the coastal strip. These expeditions spread Islam in two ways: (1) true conversion, and (2) conversion to avoid slavery.

The net effect of this sweep of Islam across Northeast Africa was to force the pagan Beja tribes southward, increasing pressure on the Axumites and slowly forcing the

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<sup>24</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 25-26.

<sup>25</sup>Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval History, pp. 190-191.

heart of the Empire in a southerly direction. As the coastal peoples and the Somalis became Islamicised, the Axumite Empire became smaller and smaller. Surrounded by Moslem peoples it did in fact become a "Christian island" for the first, but not the last, time.

A resurgence of Axumite power occurred in the late ninth and early tenth centuries with the reoccupation of the Red Sea littoral and the re-establishment of communications with Arabia by the Axumite Dynasty. However, the Empire's final decline commenced with pressures from the Beja Tribes and the rise of Gudit (Judith), a queen of the Agau people. Gudit and her ferocity form the basis of many Ethiopian legends. Some called her a Falasha Jew, others a Moslem, and others yet a pagan; but all agree her persecution of the Christian religion was not exceeded in the Horn until the advent of Ahmed Gragn in the 16th century.<sup>26</sup> Gudit nearly succeeded in eliminating Christianity in the Horn and established the Agau Dynasty which lasted until the year 1137.<sup>27</sup> After Gudit's death, a bishop named Selama was dispatched from Egypt to renew the Christian faith. Once again a churchman was to have significant impact on the course of history on the Horn, and for the next eight hundred years the patriarch

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<sup>26</sup> Ahmed Gragn is discussed in detail in the next section.

<sup>27</sup> See Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval History, pp. 225-232 for an extremely good discussion of Gudit, the fact and legend.



of the Ethiopian Church was an Egyptian. Thus, the original Greek Orthodoxy of the church began to blend with the Coptic faith of Egypt until it became the unique Ethiopian church it is today.<sup>28</sup>

In the year 1137 the throne passed from the last true Agau ruler (who inherited it from the Axumites) to a new dynasty, the Zagwe, who claimed descent from Moses.<sup>29</sup> The Zagwe originated in the area called Lasta and endured for 133 years. The most notable of the Zagwe rulers was King Lalibella whose name is immortalized in the rockhewn churches he had constructed at his birthplace, the town of Roha. Although the Zagwes can be credited with reopening contacts with the outside world, notably with Jerusalem and Egypt, they have never been accepted as "rightful rulers" by the Ethiopians. As Ullendorff puts it:

"Their usurpation of the throne is regarded as a sinister interregnum...The historical fiction of an uninterrupted line of kings descended from Menelik I, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, has very deep roots in Ethiopia and must be regarded as one of the most powerful and influential national sagas anywhere in the world."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 232. Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 61, calls this bishop Dan'el, Sellassie's work seems more carefully researched therefore the use of Selama.

<sup>29</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 33.

<sup>30</sup>Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 64. I have attached a copy of the legend as Appendix A. It is important to Ethiopian history as it forms the basis for the legitimacy of the Emperors. As long as relatives of Hailie Selassie I live, they have a claim to the throne of Ethiopia. Article 2 of the revised Constitution of 1955 (admittedly suspended) read: "The Imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of Hailie Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, whose line descends without interruption from the Dynasty of Menelik I, son of the Queen of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Jerusalem."



With the death of Lalibella the Zagwe Dynasty began its decline and once again the Church assumed a decisive role.

In 1270 A.D. the Egyptian-appointed Abuna (bishop) died and an Ethiopian priest was appointed temporary bishop. This man was Tekle Haimanot, who became known as the "Benedict of Ethiopia." He is the only Ethiopian to be canonized by the Coptic Church. Another churchman of prominence at this time was the Abbot of the Monastery of Haik, Yesus Mo'a. These two men were to become the architects for the restoration of the Solomonid line. Their conviction that the Solomonids were to be preferred was not only based on religious grounds (i.e. the elect of God) but economic grounds as well. Tekle Haimanot was offered one-third of the land of Ethiopia and Yesus Mo'a the position of what would today be called Secretary of State in return for their influence.<sup>31</sup> Their assistance was invaluable to the aspiring Yekuno Amlak, The intriguers were successful and he was able to assume the throne. Yekuno Amlak was a strong and resourceful ruler and was able to consolidate his power. With the appointment of a new Abuna from Egypt, he was able to regain some degree of control over the churchmen - but, the church through its vast landholdings (including those of Tekle Haimanot) and its influence over the population had gained a temporal foothold that was to continue until 1974.

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<sup>31</sup>Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval History. p. 286.

## 2. I'fat to the Gragn - the Moslem Assaults

The fall of the Zagwe Dynasty to the forces of Tekle Haimanot and Yekuno Amlak, the "rightful" king who traced his ancestry to the union of Solomon and Sheba, marks the beginning of modern historical documentation on the Horn of Africa.<sup>32</sup>

The center of this new dynasty, the Solomonid, became the central Amhara Plateau. This, the second southward shift, occurred as a result of the continuing pressure from the pagan tribes to the north and the new force, to the Horn at least, of religious expansion and conquest. The overriding foreign policy of the new Emperor and his successors for the next several hundred years was the liquidation, or at least containment, of the newly emerging Moslem sultanates in the southern reaches of the Horn. The primary enemy was the Sultanate of I'fat which had begun to encroach deeply into Shoa province.<sup>33</sup>

In the beginning the Ethiopians were not overly successful, and the Moslem sultanate expanded to the north gaining control over all of Shoa. By 1314 the tide began to turn and the Emperors expanded their boundaries south and eastward. Amda Sion (Yekuno Amlak's son) burned Zelia in

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<sup>32</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 45, calls this period the beginning of a "literary renaissance" on the Horn.

<sup>33</sup>See Oliver, Roland (ed), The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 3, from c. 1050 to c. 1600, Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 140-164 for an excellent account of Christian expansion and the Moslem threat.

1332.<sup>34</sup> The struggle between the two faiths continued until in the year 1441 Emperor Zara Yakob, perhaps the most successful emperor of the era, was able to consolidate the gains made by his armies and those of his predecessors. He defeated Sultan Badlay ibn As'ad-Din and broke the power of I'fat for once and for all.<sup>35</sup>

With Zari Yakob's death in 1494 Ethiopia was racked by the now characteristic struggle for power and the Sultanate of Adal began a period of ascendancy. Border warfare broke out between the two and continued until 1508. In that year Lebna Dengel became Emperor of Ethiopia and attempted to deal decisively with the, by now, major threat posed by Adal. It is during his reign that the struggle for the Horn begins to reach it's peak.<sup>36</sup>

The war began well for the Ethiopians. In 1516 Lebna Dengel successfully ambushed an invading Moslem army, killing it's commander and inflicting heavy losses. He pressed his advantage, invading Adal and laying waste to the region. Coincidentally, a Portugese fleet, finding Zelia deserted with it's Somali garrison away fighting Lebna Dengel, attacked and burnt the city for the second time in it's history.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Oliver, Cambridge History, Vol. 3, p. 155.

<sup>36</sup> Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 71.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 72. See page 30 above for the first burning of Zeilia by Amda Sion.



Lebna Dengel was a hero and "tranquility and peace reigned in all the dominions of the Negus (king)." <sup>38</sup> It was in these peaceful times that a Portuguese delegation arrived in Ethiopia. The Portuguese remained for six years, from 1520 to 1526, without making significant impact on the Emperor or the country. The first Portuguese interlude gave no hint of the decisive role that the Europeans would play in the region just twenty years later.

Adal meanwhile was torn by internal strife and near civil war. The victor in this internecine conflict was a man of legend -- Emir Ahmed ibn Ibrahaim al-Ghazi -- better known as Ahmed Gragn (the left handed). By 1529 Gragn was in control in Adal and:

"...had welded the Danakil and Somalis into a formidable striking force, inspired by the old ideal of the Jihad and lust of conquest and plunder. He initially concentrated on limited raids and incursions...but in 1529 ...he struck and inflicted a major defeat on Lebna Dengel...He was finally ready to begin the great conquest and invasion which inundated the entire territory of traditional Abyssinia." <sup>39</sup>

By the year 1534 Gragn had laid waste to most of Ethiopia. With the assistance of Turkish mercenaries (matchlockmen) from the Ottomans he had virtually destroyed the Ethiopian armies. Lebna Dengel died almost unattended,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 73. See Oliver, Cambridge History, Vol. 3, pp. 172-173 for details on this battle. Over 10,000 Ethiopians died and Lebna Dengel's power was shattered. The Ethiopian force fragmented into small resistance groups.

in hiding, but not before calling upon Portugal for aid. The response was slow but significant. In 1541 four hundred matchlockmen under Christophe de Gama disembarked at Massawa and began a trek inland to join Galadewos (Lebna Dengel's son and successor).<sup>40</sup> The Ethiopian equivalent of the battle of the Marne was about to begin.

At the time the Portugese reenforcements arrived Galadewos was literally a refugee in his own country and the armies of the Gagn were ravaging at will. Joining forces with a small contingent of Eritreans under Bhar Negash (king of the sea) Yeshaq the Portugese began to march inland. At the same time Galadewos began to march north from Shoa, gathering forces as he went.<sup>41</sup> In four battles which took place in late 1542 and early 1543 Galadewos and the Portugese ensured that the Horn of Africa would continue to be contentious ground.

The first and second battles of Lake Ashangi involved the small force of Portugese and Eritreans and Gagn's main army. The battles were not decisive but did result in the retreat of the Muslims and the wounding of Gagn. They also served to raise the spirits of Galadewos' followers who were rapidly moving north. Ahmed Gagn retreated to the edge of

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<sup>40</sup>Oliver, Cambridge History, Vol. 3, p. 177.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 181. Also see Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 49-53 for a summarization of the Portugese involvement and Gagn's Jihad.



the escarpment which overlooks the Danakil plain and called for more help from his allies. He returned with reinforcements of Arab, Turkish and Albanian matchlockmen and in a savage battle in the rain dispersed the Emperor's forces, killing half of the Portugese and taking De Gama prisoner. DeGama was later executed.<sup>42</sup>

This success on the shores of Lake Tana caused Gragn to feel he had won a decisive victory. He sent his Albanian and Arab reinforcements home and established a camp in the vicinity of the town of Woina-Dega. From here he was determined to consolidate his new empire.<sup>43</sup>

Galadewos and the surviving Portugese rallied near the town of Debaroa and after making their own gunpowder from local materials they mounted sufficient forces to challenge Gragn. In a surprise attack on 22 February 1453 the Ethiopian and Portugese force was able to defeat a numerically superior Muslim army. Their success was largely due to the death of Gragn from Portugese musket fire. The Somali and Danakil tribesmen broke and fled at Gragn's fall but the Turkish matchlockmen stood their ground until overwhelmed.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, A.H.M. and Monroe, Elizabeth, A History of Ethiopia, pp. 84-86, Clarendon Press, 1970.

<sup>44</sup> See Jones and Monroe, A History of Ethiopia, pp. 84-85, for a vivid account of this battle. Known to history as the Battle of Woina Dega, it was the high water mark of Islam on the Horn.



No account speculates as to the extent of casualties in these battles. But if one assumes the Portugese and Turkish casualties to be an indicator, the indigenous casualties must have been enormous. Of the four hundred Portugese and two hundred Turks involved, only one hundred twenty of the former and forty of the latter survived the battle.<sup>45</sup>

Had Gagn won, the Horn would have been a Moslem state controlled by a Somali elite instead of the arena of conflict that it is today. But, without the charisma of Gagn's personal leadership, the internal unity and discipline of the Army disintegrated. The Somali and Danikil warriors, which formed the core of the army, simply went home. Although Adal continued in its attempts to rally the tribesmen, and succeeded in mounting at least two major offensives (in 1559 Galadewos was killed in one of them), it never again became a serious threat to the Ethiopian Empire.<sup>46</sup>

Turkish involvement with Gran prompted the Ottomans to try to move into the highlands of Eritrea. They were defeated in 1578 by Sarsa Dengel, the son of Galadewos' successor. The Turks retreated retaining only the port

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<sup>45</sup> Turkish casualties are from Jones and Monroe, *ibid.*, p. 85. Portugese casualties and another account of the battle can be found in Oliver, Cambridge History, Vol. 3, pp. 180-182.

<sup>46</sup> Jones and Monroe, A History of Ethiopia, p. 85. Also see Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 75.

city of Massawa as a toehold.<sup>47</sup> Islam had been defeated, for a time, but two new intrusive forces became apparent on the Horn, the Galla and Roman Catholicism.

### 3. Pagans, Popes, and Princes

The human sea of nomads from the south which is known as the Galla migrations began about the middle of the sixteenth century -- around the time of Galadewos' death. In fact, the Moslem army which defeated his forces and killed him forewent the invasion of Ethiopia in order to return to their homes to protect them from the onslaught of the Galla.<sup>48</sup> These migrations continued for three hundred years. Unfortunately for the historian, the period of the migrations coincides with the "dark ages" on the Horn.

This three hundred year period was to become known as the Zemana Mesafint (Era of the Princes). The entire Horn, the Empire as well as the Sultanates, suffered a complete breakdown of central authority. The region was ruled by Rases (Dukes) and Shifta (outlaw bands) who continually fought with and against one another for local control.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 76-77.

<sup>48</sup>Gray, Richard, The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 4, from c. 1600 to c. 1790, p. 539, Cambridge University Press, 1977. Gray provides a truly insightful and comprehensive account of the Galla migrations into the Horn.

<sup>49</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 67. Greenfield writes the most lucid and easy reading account of the Zemana Mesafint, see p. 67-75.



The great battles and dramas which took place as the pagan wave of Galla broke and swept over the twin rocks of Islam and Christianity are shrouded in mystery. Ullendorff has succinctly presented the impact of these peoples on the region:

"The vacuum created by the long drawn wars between Muslims and Christians and the consequent weakening of both enabled the Galla to scale the mountain chains in the east and south of the great plateau...(they) swamped most parts of Shoa province...They settled all along the outer finges of the plateau in an immense semicircle, leaving untouched only the northern highlands, the area of the old Axumite Kindgom...The Muslims fared no better. The Gallas invaded the Harar region and settled everywhere - except the city itself. The Iman transferred his seat to Auassa."<sup>50</sup>

The Galla contributed nothing to either civiliaztion on the Horn. They had no technology and no material culture. The social organization of their various tribes was not as sophisticated as those indigenous to the area. They were not to become assimilated in either culture and remained largely a third group on the Horn. The two major actors on the Horn, Ethiopia and Somalia, have competed for the Galla's alligance at various times and with varying degrees of success up to the present day.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 77.

<sup>51</sup>A modern example is the Galla duplicity at Mai-Chew during the war with Italy (1935). When it became apparent that the Emperor's cause was lost, the Galla went over en masse to the Italians. Another example is the close cooperation between the Western Somali Liberation Front and the Galla (Oromo) separatists in Bale and Sidamo Provinces during the recent fighting in the Ogaden.



After the battle of Woina Dega the Portugese influence in Ethiopia rose for a time and then disappeared entirely:

"Portugese Roman Catholic Missionaries began to arrive in 1554 in the wake of the closer ties between the two countries. Efforts (at imposing Roman Catholicism) engendered great bitterness within the Empire as pro and anti Catholic parties struggled for control of the state...after a particularly bloody battle between adherents of the two faiths, the...Catholic emperor, Susenyos, abdicated in favor of his son Fasiladas in 1632...The expulsion of...Catholic missionaries followed. This left a strong hostility to foreign Christians and Europeans in general that continues into the twentieth century. It also contributed to the period of isolation that followed for the next 200 years."<sup>52</sup>

As a result of (1) the Galla migrations; (2) the Moslem occupation of the coastal regions; (3) the Turks at Massawa; and (4) the expulsion of the Catholics; by 1640 the central portion of the Horn was sealed off from the rest of the world. It was to remain so until the end of the Zemana Mesafint.

During the final days of the Zemana Mesafint incursions by the Egyptians from out the Sudan were portents of greater conflict to come. Campaigns during 1821, 1832, 1835 and 1844-48 resulted in Egyptian control of Gallabat, Kasalla, and the approaches to the Eritrean Highlands, including Massawa.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Kaplan, et al., Area Handbook for Ethiopia, p. 41.

<sup>53</sup>Flint, John E. (ed), The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol. 5, from c. 1790 to c. 1870. pp. 62-66, passim, Cambridge University Press, 1977.

The combination of the internal struggles of the Zemana Mesafint and the threat posed by the Egyptian incursions resulted in renewed ties between Ethiopia and the arms dealers of the outside world, most notably France and England. The rise of a shifta leader named Kassa, using imported arms, started the Horn on it's way into the modern world.

4. Three Kings- Tewdoros, Johannes and Menelik

Tewdoros (Theodore) was crowned in 1855 after a series of bloody intrigues and civil wars had effectively eliminated his opposition. Originally the son of a petty noble who became a shifta leader Tewdoros (then called Kassa) was able to establish his connection to the Solomonid line. He took his coronation name from another legend which predicted the rise of a great king named Tewdoros who would unite all the peoples of Ethiopia.<sup>54</sup> Tewdoros began to increase trade with France and England and was the first of Ethiopia's leaders who appeared to want genuinely to institute reforms, particularly in the government and the military. Unfortunately, the resistance of his Rases overcame his efforts at reform and his increasing insanity caused him to become more and more tyrannical. By 1860 his power was waning.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 74.

<sup>55</sup>Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, p. 554.



As a result of his own paranoia and an oversight in the British foreign office, Tewdoros felt he had been snubbed by Queen Victoria. He imprisoned the British consul and an envoy who subsequently was sent to effect the consul's release.<sup>56</sup>

The British reacted predictably. After noting that Tewdoros' army had decreased from over 100,000 to 15,000 and that the countryside was in revolt against him, they sent an expeditionary force under General Sir Robert Napier to secure the relief of the captives.<sup>57</sup> In January 1868 the British force landed at Zula, near Massawa. After a march of three hundred miles, which required three months to complete, the British force met Tewdoros' army (or what was left of it) on Arrogee plain at the foot of the mountain fortress of Magdala. The battle began on 10 April 1868 at four o'clock in the afternoon. By seven o'clock in the evening the action for Arrogee was over. The last shots were fired in a rainstorm which had come up in the middle of the battle. At least 700 Ethiopians were killed and over 1,200 wounded and left on the field. The British losses were 20 wounded, of whom two later died. Ethiopian courage had proved useless against well aimed rifle fire.

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<sup>56</sup> Luther, Ernest W., Ethiopia Today, p. 16, Stanford University Press, 1958.

<sup>57</sup> See Chandler, D. G., "The Expedition to Abyssinia," in Victorian Military Campaigns, pp. 105-160, by Brian Bond, (ed), Praeger Publishers, 1967, for probably the best account of this little known but important expedition.



On the 11th April Tewdoros asked for a 24 hour armistice and agreed to release the captives to Napier. He also sent some 1,500 sheep and cattle as a gift. The hostages were accepted but the animals returned -- in effect a sign of "no quarter." By this time the hostile Galla tribesmen of the region had surrounded the reverse slopes of Magdala, effectively sealing off any means of escape for the Ethiopians who remained with the insane Emperor.<sup>58</sup> On 13 April Tewdoros gave permission for any one who wished to leave and join the protection of Napier's camp. Three to four hundred fighting men elected to remain with the Emperor in the fortress of Magdala to the end. The British assault was relentless and at 9 a.m. Easter Monday, Tewdoros -- Mad King Theodore -- killed himself with a pistol as the survivors of his force surrendered to the British.<sup>59</sup>

The victors made no attempt to consolidate or colonize the Ethiopian Empire. Once Napier had released the captives he simply marched back to Zula and boarded ship. He did, however, reward those Ethiopian Rases who had assisted his efforts. Most notable of these was another Kassa, discussed

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>59</sup> Nearly every work which mentions Tewdoros cites the circumstances of his suicide (ironically with a pistol which was a gift from Queen Victoria). Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 82-84 has the most interesting insight into the impact of this event on the Ethiopian national psyche.

below. The major result of the British victory was that it left the impression that the Horn was ripe for the taking. An impression that impacted strongly on the Italians as shall become apparent.

At the death of Tewdoros, Ras Kassa of Tigre became the most powerful prince in Ethiopia. Napier had made him a present of 6 mortars, 6 howitzers (with 200 rounds of ammunition each), 850 muskets and 28 barrels of gunpowder. Kassa put them to good use and by 1872 was crowned Johannes IV as Aksum.<sup>60</sup> A personally brave man, he spent most of his rule at war with the Egyptians, Mahdists and Italians. By 1885 he had brought most of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea under his sway and through a marriage arrangement gained the support of Menelik of Shoa, the second most powerful man in the Horn. Thus Johannes was the first Emperor to rule, albeit briefly and tenuously, an Ethiopia which corresponded roughly to what it is today.<sup>61</sup> But he did not do so without a struggle.

In 1875 Egypt attempted to invade Johannes' realm. A three-pronged attempt resulted in success in the south with the Egyptians occupying Harar and Zelia. A column from

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<sup>60</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 89 and Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, p. 587.

<sup>61</sup>Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, p. 47.



the region of Djibouti (led by a Swiss named Muntzinger) was destroyed in the Danakil Desert, the third and largest attempt entered Eritrea from Massawa and was annihilated on the plain of Gundet with a loss of 1,800 Egyptians killed. Johannes gained 2,000 modern rifles and some more cannon. Another attempt in 1876 under an American chief of staff (General W. W. Loring) was destroyed at Gura.<sup>62</sup> After 1876 the Egyptians made no further attempts to disturb the Ethiopians. They had their hands full with a mystic who had appeared in the Sudan -- Muhammad Ahmad bin 'Abdallah -- called The Mahdi.

For a short time Johannes was distracted from events in the Sudan by the Italians. In 1885 they had replaced the Turks at Massawa and had begun to move inland. There is evidence that the British aided and encouraged Italian efforts in the first of many examples of English duplicity on the Horn.<sup>63</sup> The Italians may have expected an easy success like that of Napier but they were disappointed. Johannes was no Tewdoros. The Battle of Dogali in 1885 left a column of 650 Italian soldiers massacred to a man, the Italians fell back on Massawa.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Flint, Cambridge History, Vol. 5, pp. 95-96.

<sup>63</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 92.

<sup>64</sup>Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, p. 91 credits Ras Alula, the governor of Eritrea with this victory, however there is no doubt that the Ras was acting in accordance with Johannes' desires.



The coast of Somaliland was occupied by the Italians in 1888, an event that will be discussed later in this paper. As a result of Dogali and other clashes the Italians began to shift forces in order to mass an army in Massawa. In March of 1888 Johannes responded by poising an army of 100,000 men for an attack on the town.<sup>65</sup>

Without the rise of the Mahdi and his successor the Kalipha Ta'ishi Abdullahi bin Mohammed in the Sudan, the battle of Adowa might have taken place in 1888. But, in 1887 the Mahdists invaded and burned Gondar, Johannes' captial and he saw them as the more immediate threat. It also must be noted that the British were anxious for the Ethiopians to relieve pressure on the the Sudanese/Egyptian Garrisons along the border. They were able to convince Johannes that he should relieve them and a treaty had been signed to that effect on 3 June 1884.<sup>66</sup> At any rate and for whatever reason the fact remains that Johannes turned from the Italians at Massawa and marched to meet his doom on the zariba at Mettema.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Woolf, Leonard. Empire and Commerce in Africa, p. 165, Howard Fertig Publishers, 1968.

<sup>66</sup> Jones and Monroe, A History of Ethiopia, pp. 136-317.

<sup>67</sup> Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 94-95. Also see Churchill, Winston S., The River War, pp. 78-80 Four Square Books, 1960, for a graphic account of the Battle of Mettema and its aftermath.

The dervish (followers of the Kalipha) had fortified the position at Gallabat on the edge of Mettema plain. They had erected an enormous zariba (palisade) and then took up positions outside the works. At dawn of 10 March 1889 the Ethiopians met them head on. The attack was successful and the zariba set afire and penetrated. The Ethiopians were inside beginning to loot when the word was passed that Johannes had been wounded and taken from the field.<sup>68</sup> Much as the armies of Ahmed Gragn had done, the Ethiopian army simply melted from the field and started home. Johannes died the next day during the retreat. The dervish pursued the retreating Ethiopians to the foot of the highlands but could not follow up their victory. This battle had an impact beyond that on Ethiopia. As Churchill put it:

"The flower of the Dervish army, the heroic blacks of Abu Anga, were almost destroyed. The Kalifa had won a Pyrrhic triumph. Never again was he able to put so great a force in the field, and although the army that was shattered at Omdurman was better armed and better drilled, it was less formidable than that which broke the might of Abyssinia."<sup>69</sup>

The Italians took advantage of the respite to occupy portions of Eritrea and by the end of 1890 were safely encamped both to the north and to the south of Ethiopia. They now had a firm foothold on the Horn. Johannes' death opened the way for Menelik of Shoa to claim the throne that Johannes

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<sup>68</sup> Churchill, The River War, p. 79.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 83.



had promised him. Unfortunately, Johannes had reneged on the promise and on his death-bed named his son Ras Mangasha as his successor.<sup>70</sup>

During Johannes' reign Menelik had occupied himself with expanding his own kingdom of Shoa to the south. He had also opened up trade on his own with French and British arms merchants via Djibouti. He now concentrated his efforts on subduing the recalcitrant northern Rases to his will. He entered into agreement with the Italians which resulted in the closure of the arms trade through Eritrean ports. Deprived of the supplies needed to conduct the war, the rebellious Rases were subjugated and Menelik was crowned Negus Negast (the King of Kings). Thus, the center of the Empire shifted to the south once more, from Tigre-Eritrea to Shoa, an event which rankles some northerners to this day.

Menelik's influence on the Horn is enormous.

According to Richard Greenfield:

"In its extent, its government and its problems, present day Ethiopia is largely the creation of the Emperor Menelik II. The process dating from long before his assumption of the imperial crown, began as the expansion of the southerly kingdom, now province, of Shewa (sic), of which he was negus... Interpretations of Menelik's expansionist policy vary widely. Not only are they something of a political issue, for the Somali Republic views Menelik II as a participator in the 'Scramble

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<sup>70</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 95.



for Africa', but scholars also disagree. The author inclines to the view that Menelik was motivated in part by a desire to occupy as many areas as possible before they were seized by the imperialist powers of Europe and his actions were, therefore, to some extent a response to the 'Scramble for Africa'...However the fact remains that between 1872 and 1896 the territory which Menelik ruled was more than doubled in area."<sup>71</sup>

In return for Italy's assistance, Menelik signed the famous Treaty of Ucciali, which in effect granted the Italians the right to colonize Eritrea. The treaty formed the basis for the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1896:

"...(the treaty) stated, in its Amharic version, that the Emperor might avail himself of the Italian Government in his relations with foreign states, whereas the Italian text stipulated that he shall do so. Italy thus had become, in effect, the protecting power of the whole of Ethiopia and had informed other governments accordingly. When Menelik heard of this interpretation...his relations with Italy became vitiated and tense."<sup>72</sup>

On 18 January 1896 the Italians demanded the immediate annexation of a large part of Tigre province to their colony of Eritrea. A battalion of troops marched into Tigre to take possession. They got as far as Makelle where they were destroyed to the last man.<sup>73</sup> This small engagement had the impact of a "Custers last stand" on the Italians and created a furor which resulted in demands that the governor

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 120. Also see Map 3, p. 43 below.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>73</sup>Barker, A.J., The Civilizing Mission, p. 23, Dial Press, 1968.





of the colony be removed. The Ethiopians began to mass to the sound of the negaret (war drum) and marched toward the border demarcated by the Mareb River. General Barateri, faced with the need for a victory to ensure the governors' job, gambled the lives of 14,000 of his soldiers -- and lost. The two forces met at a town called Adowa and the battle they fought there has been called the "most important battle ever fought on the continent of Africa."<sup>74</sup>

Poor generalship, faulty intelligence and plain foolishness led to an utter disaster for Italian arms. Overwhelmed by 140,000 Ethiopian warriors, the Italian force was literally destroyed. Of the 10,596 Italians involved in the fighting 6,000 were killed, 2,000 wounded, and 2,000 taken prisoner. None of the 4,000 Eritrean levies escaped either all having been killed or mutilated after being captured.<sup>75</sup>

The disaster could have been worse had Menelik pursued the retreating Italians. Menelik did not follow up on his advantage, nor did he attempt to seize Eritrea. Instead, the Treaty of Addis Ababa left Eritrea in Italian hands.

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<sup>74</sup>Dugan, James and Lafore, Laurence, *Days of Emperor and Clown*, p. 10, Doubleday and Co., 1973. They also say of Adowa -- "(it was) the most important battle -- next to Sedan... in which any European army took part in the nineteenth century."

<sup>75</sup>Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, pp. 602-603.



George Baer advances the theory that Menelik wanted to use the Italian threat to increase national unity and the loyalty of the Rases to his throne.<sup>76</sup> Others feel that his troops were not disciplined enough to engage in a pursuit, however badly beaten the enemy was. The why of the matter is immaterial. The fact that the Italians remained in Eritrea became a matter of terrible importance in the years ahead.

The Battle of Adowaput Ethiopia on the map and attracted the attention of the world. Menelik's new capital, Addis Ababa, was thriving with legations and ambassadors. The French came with economic interests and began the Franco-Ethiopian Railway (still Ethiopia's main artery to the sea), the British were not far behind. The Italians began to plot.

The "Adowa Complex" as the rankling of the Italian defeat became known, and the desire to expand their colonial possessions came to dominate the Italian political psyche. In 1906 the British and French joined them in signing a document which outlined "spheres of influence" in Ethiopia. This was, in effect, a plan for the colonization of Ethiopia on the death of Menelik.<sup>77</sup> The significance of the act was the recognition of the colonial importance of Ethiopia to

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<sup>76</sup> Baer, George, The Coming of the Italo-Ethiopian War, p. 5, Harvard University Press, 1967.

<sup>77</sup> Barker, The Civilizing Mission, p. 25.

Italy. Menelik died in 1913 but Ethiopia was saved by World War I -- Europe was too embroiled in her own war with no time or troops to spare, otherwise there is little doubt that Ethiopia would have been split up and occupied by the colonial powers.

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This review of events prior to 1900 supports beginning an analysis of the modern history of the Horn of Africa with the following givens:

1. Prior to Tewdoros, Johannes and Menlik the peoples of the Horn were relatively "a territorial," as Bohannon and Curtin define it:

"...(the) community was and is built fundamentally on relationships within social groups based on some principle other than 'economics'; that community is set into space, by other than associations of 'ownership' as we recognize it, and exploits the space around it."<sup>78</sup>

2. No firm nationalistic ideas had been inculcated into the peoples of the Horn. There is no mention of Eritrean secessionism, Somali irridentism, or even Ethiopian nationalism, although the latter began to surface about the time of Menelik.

3. Prior to the death of Menelik, the Horn of Africa was characterized by primordialism of the classic type as identified by Geertz:

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<sup>78</sup> Bohannon, Paul and Curtin, Phillip, Africa and Africans, p. 120, Natural History Press, 1971



"(Primordial attachment is)...being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself."<sup>79</sup>

These attributes were to undergo rapid and far reaching change as the result of an "X" factor -- "The Scramble for Africa." The power of modern technology and the intrusion of external power, most notably the Italians, into the region made it possible for Menelik to be a successful participant in the "scramble." As a result, present day political geography on the Horn is a function of the shifting borders of Ethiopia, and the stuff of legend, history, and tradition play a large role in the problems extant there today.

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<sup>79</sup> Geertz, Clifford (ed), Old Societies and New States, p. 109, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.



### III. THE MODERN BACKDROP

#### A. POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

The impact of the "scramble for Africa," including Menelik's participation, resulted in the demarcation of boundaries and spheres of influence on the Horn. It can, and has been, argued that since Menelik's time the pattern of alliances and the nature of conflict in the region have had some basis in the "nationalistic" aspirations of the states inhabiting these disputed boundaries.

Virtually all of the boundaries in the Horn were established during or just after Menelik's reign and so it is appropriate at this point to examine the political geography of the Horn as it existed at that time. Ethiopia is central to the Horn and as a result shares borders with all of the regional actors. It is from this Ethiopian perspective that the political geography is most clearly perceived.

As discussed in the previous chapter the Ethiopian heartland shifted from Tigre-Eritrea to Lasta, Gondar and finally to Shoa as a result of the pressures of Islam and Menelik's preoccupation with the southern regions. The Italian occupation of Eritrea and the treaty of Addis Ababa, after Adowa, resulted in a formalized border running roughly along the

present provincial boundary between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This demarcation strengthened the sense of separate identity already felt by the Eritreans.<sup>80</sup>

In Somalia the British first established a protectorate in 1884, and by 1887 they had declared the establishment of British Somaliland. The Italians concluded formal treaties with the Somali Sultans as well. They began to expand inland across the coastal belt into the Somali Plateau. By 1905 the area was known as Italian Somaliland.

The British and Italians agreed upon borders between their respective Somalilands and also the Somaliland-Kenya border in 1891. The latter was further revised in favor of the Italians in order to obtain Italy's withdrawal from the central powers in World War I. Formal recognition of the border came about in 1925.<sup>81</sup>

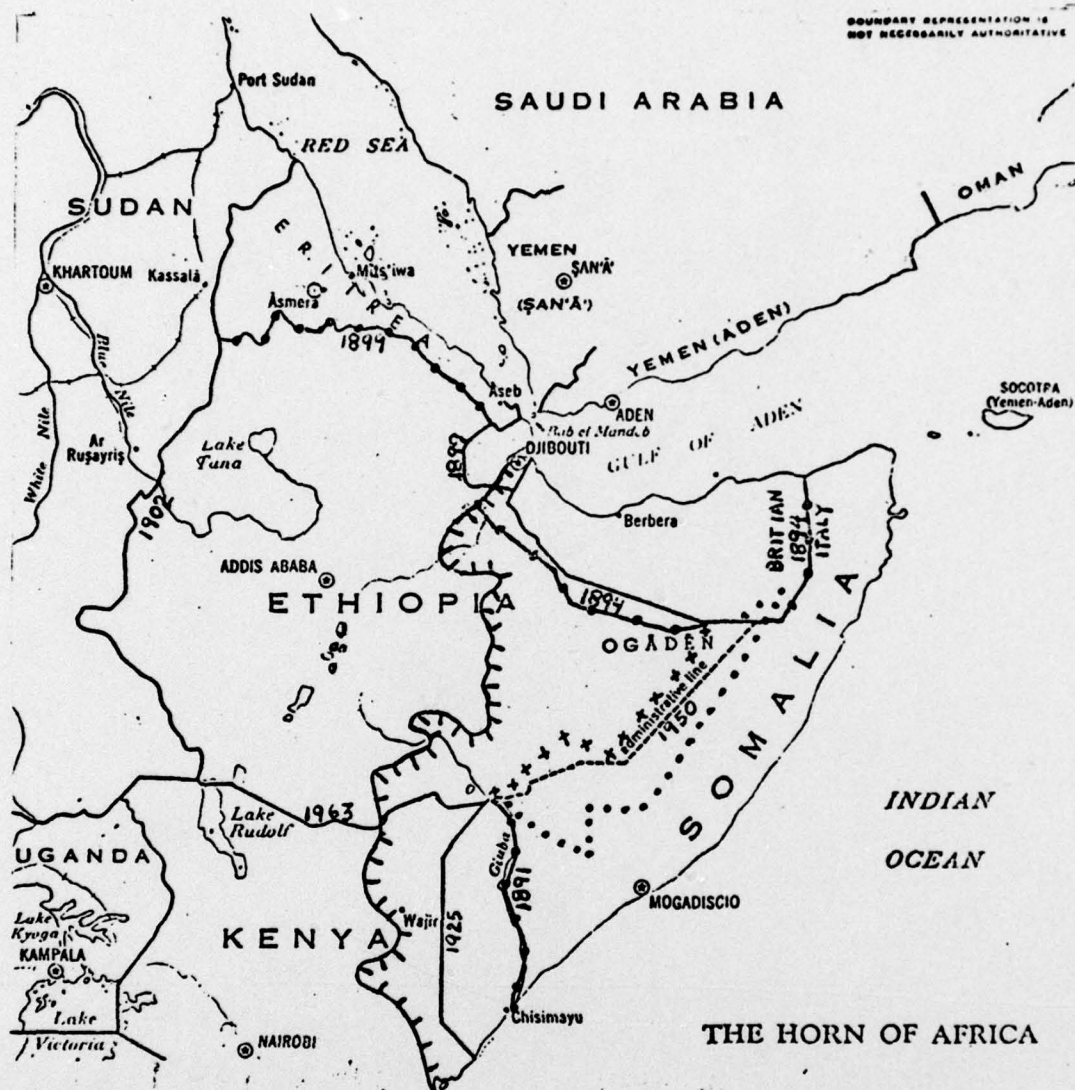
The border between Ethiopia and the two Somalilands was established in the same manner in 1894, i.e. agreement between the British and Italians without consultation with either the Somalis or Ethiopians, both of whom were to challenge the boundaries. In 1908 Ethiopia and Italy agreed upon a new demarcation of the border between Ethiopia and Italian

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<sup>80</sup>See Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, p. 24, for a discussion of the Treaty of Addis Ababa.

<sup>81</sup>Henderson, Robert E., "The Horn of Africa," The Washington Review, Special Supplement, May 1978, p. 7.





- Somali ethnic limit
- International Boundary
- Former Colonial Boundary
- ..... Administrative Line 1950
- xxxxx Italian interpretation of 1908 treaty
- ..... Ethiopian Interpretation of 1908 treaty

MAP 4 - Political Geography

Adapted from: Kaplan,  
Handbook for Ethiopia



Somaliland. The only two maps showing the new boundary were subsequently lost and the border has been in dispute ever since.<sup>82</sup>

The modern boundary between Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti was established peacefully by the French in 1897 and has remained stable since that time.<sup>83</sup>

The frontier between Ethiopia and Sudan was established in 1902. This border, the longest common border in Africa, has been the scene of serious tensions. Although mutually recognized, both parties have historically been troubled by hostile groups operating from sanctuary in the other country.<sup>84</sup> The border with Kenya was demarcated in colonial times but was not recognized until 1963. This border is also contested by the Somalis who claim a portion of Northwest Kenya as Somali territory.<sup>85</sup>

With Ethiopia surrounded by hostile or colonizing powers for the second time in her history, and considering the desire of those powers to reap the benefit of additional colonies, (as well as avenging a shameful defeat in the case of the Italians), it is not surprising that conflict would continue to characterize the Horn. The only surprise is that it took as long as it did to return.

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<sup>82</sup> Lewis, A Modern History of Somaliland, pp. 89-90.

<sup>83</sup> And will probably remain so as long as French troops remain in Djibouti.

<sup>84</sup> Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, p. 315.

<sup>85</sup> Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Somalia, pp. 174-175.

## B. THE ITALIAN IMPACT

### 1. Ethiopia

On the death of Menelik, Ethiopia was racked by civil war and disorder. During this period of turmoil his designated successor, Lij (Prince) Eyasu, embraced Islam and declared Ethiopia to be in the sphere of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>86</sup> The Shoan nobles proclaimed Zauditu, Menelik's daughter, Empress and Ras Tafari Makonnen regent and heir presumptive. Lij Eyasu was excommunicated from the Church and, after a brief civil disturbance, his supporters were overpowered by the forces of the Empress. The muslim Negus died in prison in 1935.<sup>87</sup>

Ras Tafari Makonnen began to build his own forces and milked his province of Harar for revenues until he was in a position to make a bid for control of the government. The death of the aged foreign minister, Fitwary Habta Giorgis, provided him the opportunity he needed. He moved his forces from Harar to Addis Ababa and assumed command of the army, and therefore, the government. In 1928 he was crowned Negus and was exercising direct rule while the Empress by now was reduced to a mere figurehead. The takeover was not without bloodshed. The old Empress attempted to rally her followers, the foremost of which was Ras Gugsa Wolie of Gondar. Tafari's

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<sup>86</sup>See Jones and Monroe, A History of Ethiopia, pp.155-160 for a good analysis of events during the reign of Eyasu.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 159.



army destroyed his forces on 31 March 1930. The next day the Empress Zauditu died of uncertain causes. Immediately after a period of mourning Ras Tafari Makonnen became Hailie Selassie I, Negus Negast.<sup>88</sup>

The new Emperor's ambition was the modernization of his Empire. Yet, due to the recalcitrance of his Rases, which in Gojam and Tigre actually led to revolt, much of his time was spent in consolidating power and coopting his opposition largely through gaining the support of the church. His most significant achievements during this first five years as emperor were (1) the first constitution; (2) the development of a bureaucracy; (3) the abolition of slavery; (4) the beginnings of a modernization of the army; and, perhaps most important, (5) the beginnings of an educated class of Ethiopians.<sup>89</sup>

All was not well however, for if it seemed that Hailie Selassie had a firm hand on the rudder of state in 1935, others were casting covetous eyes on the helm. The interests of the great powers, particularly Italy, had been diverted (but not ended) by World War I. In fact, Italy began to court Ethiopia -- on the surface. Ethiopia's entry to the League of Nations was supported by Italy and a treaty

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<sup>88</sup>See Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 147-164 for a lucid account of Hailie Selassie's rise to power.

<sup>89</sup>The first years of the new Emperor are summarized in excellent fashion by Markakis, John, Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Policy, pp. 201-204, Clarendon Press, 1974.



of friendship was signed in 1923 and again in 1928. These apparently friendly acts were designed to achieve the economic and political penetration of Ethiopia. Angelo Del Boca in his book, *The Ethiopian War*, says clearly that the Italians had begun planning the invasion as early as 1925.<sup>90</sup>

Not until 1934 however, did the right set of circumstances arise. While it is not within the limits of this paper to examine those events in detail it is sufficient to know that on 5 December 1934 a skirmish at a place called Wal-Wal is said by some to have been the opening round of World War II. Fighting which broke out between an Italian garrison squatting deep inside Ethiopian territory and an Ethiopian force which was escorting aboundary commission, left over 130 Somali and Ethiopian soldiers dead around the wells at Wal-Wal.<sup>91</sup> Both countries lodged immediate complaints with the League of Nations. But the League procrastinated while the British and French hesitated (they were afraid of driving Italy into the arms of Hitler's Germany). The Ethiopians placed their trust in the Emperor who in turn placed his faith in the League of Nations. In the meantime the Italians began to build up forces in Somalia and Eritrea.

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<sup>90</sup>Del Boca, Angelo, *The Ethiopian War*, 1935-41, p. 9, University of Chicago Press, 1969.

<sup>91</sup>Baer's detailed and scholarly book, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War* is without a doubt the definitive study of the events leading up to the war. On page 54 he cites the losses at Wal-Wal as Somali - 30 dead, 100 wounded. Ethiopian - 107 dead, 45 wounded.

On 3 October 1935, the Italian forces crossed the Ethiopian/Eritrean frontier. The attack was initially conventional in nature and well-disciplined. With the appointment of Marshal Badoglio in Eritrea in November and Marshal Graziani (who will be discussed later) in the Ogaden, the character of the war changed. The use of poison gas and the execution of prisoners, both male and female, was commonplace. Open towns, hospitals, churches, and most everything else Ethiopian were bombed and shelled relentlessly. Although the Emperor's forces resisted stubbornly at first, they simply could not compete with the well-equipped and well-trained Italian forces.

The war will not be examined in detail, but one phenomenon must be mentioned. After major defeats at Tembien, Shire and Dhagabur and during the final major defeat at Mai-Chew, large numbers of Tigre, Galla and other ethnic minorities deserted the Emperor and went over to the Italians.<sup>92</sup> The outcome of the war can be condensed into one sentence. The Ethiopians were defeated by invading columns from Eritrea and Somalia, both of which included large numbers of Eritreans, Somalis and other ethnic groups whose attitudes toward the Empire had been inflamed by the Italians (as elaborated below).

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<sup>92</sup>This point is made by Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, Barker, The Civilizing Mission, and Duggan and Lafore, Days of Emperor and Clown. The reader is referred to these three works if his interest in this "hot little war" has been stimulated.



As Addis Ababa was occupied, the Emperor fled into exile in England, and on 9 May 1936 Ethiopia was proclaimed a part of the Italian Empire.<sup>93</sup> Events in Europe and the stirrings of World War II then captured the attention of the world and from 1936 to 1941 the Italians were unchecked in the Horn.

Italy's new constitution for "Italian East Africa" brought Ethiopia, Italian Somaliland and Eritrea together with the whole divided into six provinces. Political power was in the hands of the Italian army and the Fascist Party who exercised it through their surrogate Somalis, Eritreans and occasionally Ethiopians. Mussolini recognized that years would be required before Ethiopia could make a return on capital invested in her, but there were many people willing to take the gamble.

According to Ernest Luther, Italian investment in road construction alone was in excess of \$300 million and the rise in imports to support construction programs was a spectacular 3,000 percent. He also states that an equivalent amount (\$300 million) was spent on development of telegraph and telephone systems and hydroelectric facilities.<sup>94</sup> From 1937 to 1940 over 300,000 settlers and entrepreneurs emigrated to Ethiopia. According to Italian government

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<sup>93</sup>Barker, The Civilizing Mission, p. 289.

<sup>94</sup>Luther, Ethiopia Today, passim.



figures (as furnished to Del Boca) there were 986 professional men, 540 agricultural concessionaries, and over 4,000 "industrialists" and shopkeepers in this group. Total private investment was in excess of three billion lire at a time when the average weekly wage in Italy was 45 lire. During the five year occupation 5,000 kilometers of road, 25 hospitals (only one existed before the war), schools, municipal buildings, bridges and prisons were constructed. In order to facilitate this program of construction, additional improvements were made in the harbors at Massawa and Assab and aviation facilities were built as well. Agricultural innovations and equipment were introduced in those areas firmly under Italian control and improvements in output were rapid in coming.<sup>95</sup> Nearly every work on Ethiopia dealing with this period comments on the tremendous investment made by the Italians in Ethiopia and on the rapid construction of an infrastructure that would have taken the Ethiopian government many years to create, if at all. It is generally overlooked that all this work was not done out of a desire to improve the lot of the Ethiopian, but rather to compliment the exploitation of the country. It was Italian development, not Ethiopian development. The fact that the

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<sup>95</sup>Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, passim.

work done by the Italians was to prove of great value in later modernization schemes does not excuse exploitation nor compensate for the calculated terror of the occupation.

Although the Italians declared Ethiopia under their control in 1936 at no time did they govern the entire countryside.<sup>96</sup> The policy of "all rebels captured are to be shot" and the energy with which it was implemented generated resistance groups which called themselves Arbannoch (patriots). Many of the arbannoch leaders were captured and executed but a number of them survived to be rewarded with positions of authority in the new Empire after the war.<sup>97</sup>

Of more sinister character was the calculated attempt on the part of the Italians to liquidate whole influence groups. This policy of selective extermination had its roots in an assassination attempt on Marshal Graziani, the King of Italy's Viceroy in Ethiopia. Although the attempt failed, a series of reprisals was made -- estimates of the victims of those reprisals run as high as 30,000 persons in a three day massacre in Addis Ababa alone, the lowest estimate evidenced was 1,400. Graziani became obsessed with hatred and saw enemies everywhere. Unable to trace his would be assassins he took advantage of the opportunity to liquidate

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<sup>96</sup> See Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, pp. 239-252.

<sup>97</sup> See Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 220-248 for an excellent account of the activities of the Arbannoch during the occupation.



the entire Ethiopian intelligencia, every member of the Young Ethiopian Party, and all officers and cadets of the Military Academy. He also ordered the execution of large numbers of clergy -- at Debra Libanos alone over 300 monks and priests were shot out of hand.<sup>98</sup> Graziani's own words best illustrate the cold-bloodedness of the Italian policy in Ethiopia as contrasted with their benign approach in Eritrea and Somalia.

"Extermination of all Amhara chiefs, great and small must be speeded up, for if this is not done we can only expect further trouble. As well as chiefs all Amhara military commanders and officials must be executed -- none to be spared out of feelings of false pity."<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps his most famous public statement:

"The Duce shall have Ethiopia, with or without the Ethiopians, just as he pleases."<sup>100</sup>

Finally even Mussolini realized that events were out of control and in November 1937 Graziani was replaced by the Duke of Aosta, a cultured and humane man, but the damage had been done and the Duke faced increasing resistance. The people had become convinced that the Italians meant to exterminate them. This fear was reinforced by the seemingly insane attacks on the church. In fact, these attacks were part of a coldly calculated plan whereby the Italians were

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<sup>98</sup> Every historian interested in the events of these times, be he Italian, Ethiopian, or other, has his own "favorite" horror story about the reprisals and liquidations. They differ only in numbers of dead, the events are agreed to by all.

<sup>99</sup> La civilisation de 'Italie Fasciste en Ethiopie, p. 120, quoted in Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, p. 225.

<sup>100</sup> Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, p. 225.



attempting to widen ethnic and religious cleavages (mentioned earlier) in a sort of "divide and rule" policy. Their actions were designed to favor the predominant Galla and Moslem groups at the expense of the Amhara and Christian. A result of this persecution was a drawing together of the Christian Amhara and some members of other ethnic groups into a hardened resistance which had the blessing and support of the church. To counter this resistance the Italians formed a "Black Army" of Tigre, Eritrean and Somali troops and upon their deployment a climate of civil war was created which further widened the cleavages.

In 1941 the Emperor with British and Commonwealth assistance was returned to Addis Ababa and the Italian presence destroyed in fairly heavy fighting.<sup>101</sup> It was the intention of British forces to impose a mandate over the entire Horn of Africa. The Emperor, largely through personal audacity and the help of Churchill, was able to thwart the desires of the field commanders as far as Ethiopia proper was concerned. The British did, however, retain control of the Haud and Ogaden regions, as well as the former Italian colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

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<sup>101</sup>For the definitive account of the liberation of the Horn see Playfair, Maj. Gen. I.S.O., The Mediterranean and Middle East, I, chapters xxi-xxiii, HMSO, 1954.

## 2. Eritrea

After the defeat of Italian imperialism at Adowa the Italians began to build up their colony in Eritrea. As Trevaskis puts it:

"Eritrea was created, and so named, by the Italians. No concession was made to...past history or the racial and cultural complexion of its inhabitants."<sup>102</sup>

The Italian regime in Eritrea was not oppressive, although they tended to support the Moslem elements of the population at the expense of the Christians. Development policies were similar to those the Italians were to follow in Ethiopia. However, the Eritrean reaped some immediate benefit from the developmental efforts of the Italians. In Ethiopia, the Italians brought in Eritreans and Somalis to help them operate the colony. In Eritrea there were no "middle men." From a physical point of view the Italians brought roads, bridges, and a railway was built from Agordat to Massawa. The port of Massawa itself was modernized, becoming competitive with any port in Africa. Animal and human diseases were attacked and controlled, if not eliminated. A city, Asmara, was built as a replica of an Italian town plumped down onto the Eritrean plateau.<sup>103</sup> Of more

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<sup>102</sup>Trevaskis, Eritrea, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., passim, pp. 8-11, and Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, particularly chapter 2.



significance, the Italians brought a legal system. No longer subject to arbitrary whims of the Rases and Neguses the people under Italian direction formed a rudimentary administrative apparatus and government.

Large numbers of Eritreans died in the Battle of Adowa and many more were to fall in later battles. The Italians made serious attempts to prepare the Eritreans to follow their Italian leaders into battle against the Ethiopians in 1935.<sup>104</sup> Old rivalries between Shoan and Tigrynian claims to the throne were revived and intensification of the anti-Christian attitudes on the part of Islamic elements of the population were undertaken.

During the Italian occupation of Ethiopia proper, Eritrea became a "most favored province" along with Somalia, and did not suffer the reprisals nor the privations that the rest of the country had to endure. In fact, Italian colonial policy tended to reinforce the sense of superiority felt by many Eritreans.

The real significance of Italian colonial rule in Eritrea, both before and during the war, was the isolation of the area from its former contacts and the creation of a new society. (It also inculcated a separate identity in the minds of the population -- Eritrean.) Once again Trevaskis probably says it best:

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<sup>104</sup> See page 49 above for Eritrean losses. Del Boca, The Ethiopian War devotes a good part of chapter 2 to discussing Italian preparation for the war.



"Italy created Eritrea...by severing its different peoples from those with whom their past had been linked and by grafting the amputated remnants to each other under the title of Eritrean."<sup>105</sup>

### 3. Somalia

In Somalia prior to the arrival of the Italians and British there had never been an institutionalized government. Tribal resistance began almost immediately in those areas where the population came into contact with the colonizers. The Italians practiced the old game of playing one clan off against another and also took advantage of such religious cleavages as existed. The British followed their normal pattern of indirect rule and did not impact seriously on the Somali culture.

A religious revival gave rise to the second of Somalia's great heros during the early years. The "Mad Mullah" -- Mohammed Ibn Abdullah Hassan -- fought against the British, Italians, Ethiopians and any Somali who was not of his religious order. The rebellion lasted twenty-one years and required the combined efforts of Britain, Italy and Ethiopia to put down. Yet, they never completely suppressed the Mullah's followers and today the Mullah ranks with Ahmed Gragn as one of the leading figures in Somali nationalist thought. His memory surely lives today in the ongoing attempts to regain the lost territory and in the Moslem ethic of the Somali. Douglas Jardine writes:

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<sup>105</sup>Trevaskis, Eritrea, p. 10.

"Intensely as the Somalis feared and loathed the man whose followers had looted their stock, robbed them of their all, raped their wives, and murdered their children, they could not but admire and respect one who, being the embodiment of their idea of Freedom and Liberty, never admitted allegiance to any man, Moslem or infidel."<sup>106</sup>

The Mullah is the symbol of Somali nationalism.

On nationalism Saadia Touval says:

"Somali nationalism stems from a feeling of national consciousness in the sense of 'we' as opposed to 'they' which has existed among the Somalis for many centuries."<sup>107</sup>

The Italians simply directed this feeling into a political vein as evidenced by a telegram from Marshal Graziani to Mussolini in 1936:

"Idea of 'Greater Somalia' under Italian rule now established in minds of all Somalis, even primitive woodland dwellers now convinced of superiority of Somalis over Ethiopians."<sup>108</sup>

It is not intended to imply that the Italians in Italian Somaliland, and during the war years in British Somaliland, simply threw a switch and produced irridentism. However, in large measure it was culture contact which reoriented Somali nationalism, as described by Touval, toward the relationship of land for the state rather than the people of the nation. The fact that the Ogaden and all other lands

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<sup>106</sup>Jardine, Douglas, The Mad Mullah of Somaliland, quoted in Touval, Somali Nationalism, p. 54.

<sup>107</sup>Touval, Somali Nationalism, p. 84.

<sup>108</sup>Del Boca, The Ethiopian War, p. 26.

claimed by the Somalis were retained under British and later Italian trusteeship did nothing to dispel that idea of "Greater Somiali."<sup>109</sup>

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When cultures meet and synthesize there are obviously a myriad of factors and aspects which must be considered capable of influencing the outcome. Given the complexity of the situation on the Horn many of the factors which may be considered important -- even crucial -- may have been omitted. But, as with any other situation, the impact of the Italians on the Horn is a matter of perspective -- i.e. from where one views the situation so that what is beneficial from one point of view can be a disaster from another. The significance of the Italian influence appears to be profound in three areas:

1. The creation of an economic infrastructure and agricultural modernization.
2. The consequences of the reprisals and executions during the occupation.
3. The exacerbation of existing cleavages in Eritrea and Somalia and the subsequent foundation for the twin disputes which trouble the Horn today.

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<sup>109</sup> The British remained in Eritrea until 1952, the Ogaden until 1955, 1960 in Kenya and British Somaliland. The Italians left Somaliland in 1960 as well.



The tremendous capital investment that Italy made in what hoped to be her future empire has been discussed -- an empire of demographic colonization, with a million Italians settled on it's most fertile land. Of course the liberation of the country by the allies saw much of the infrastructure destroyed or damaged. Even so, it is indisputable that much of the development survived the war and provided the Emperor with a head start on modernization. The exposure of the populace to modern agricultural techniques also would prove to be advantageous to the Emperor's modernization plans. For the first time many Ethiopians began to understand the need to move into the modern world in some sectors of life in order to compete as an independent nation. The impact of this aspect of Italian influence was especially hard hitting in Eritrea, which experienced it the longest and had acquired the most extensive infrastructure.

The reprisals and executions had tremendous impact on Ethiopian society and development as well, though oddly in both an advantageous and, at the same time, debilitating and disruptive way.

On the plus side, the systematic elimination of the Amhara nobility destroyed the traditional feudal hierarchy that existed before the war. Many of the Rases who opposed the Emperor's desires were gone. Concurrently with the downfall of the old Rases a new group of nobility rose from the patriot forces of the Arbannoch. Not quite as conservative

as the old Rases but not quite as radical as the students who followed them, nevertheless a strong and respected group which made the Emperor's task after the war easier than it might have been. For example, the establishment of a national army, central control of policy and justice, public health, etc. -- all would have been opposed by the old Rases as being threats to their power. Admittedly these innovations may not have been as effective or efficient as possible because they have not roots in the society, but it is a fact that the Italians plowed the ground for the planting of the seeds from which many of the institutions have taken root.

On the negative side, the execution of the cream of Ethiopia's educated youth was a tragedy in more ways than one. Practically every educated man was shot in 1937. A generation of potential leaders was destroyed. In 1974, that generation might have provided that line of communication between the older generation and the students clamoring for change. They might have been the Colonels who had the respect and confidence of the junior officers. They might have been the advisors who could have helped the Emperor meet the expectations of his people. Sadly, no one knows what might have been.

The pro-Moslem, anti-Amhara stance adopted by the Italians in Eritrea and Somalia from the beginning, and later adopted during the occupation of Ethiopia had far reaching effects.

The treatment of Eritrea and Somalia as favored provinces during the occupation further widen cleavages. But it was the ideas of autonomy and economic advantage which lured the Eritreans and Somalis into supporting the Italians. Neither Somalia nor Eritrea suffered the devastation of the campaign or the reprisals of Graziani. The promise of "Greater Somalia" and independent Eritrea was the concept which reoriented the thinking of the inhabitants toward specific territory (ies) and contributed most to the conflict which exists today.



#### IV. NATIONLESS STATES AND STATELESS NATIONS

It can be asserted that the cultural contact between the Italian and the peoples of the Horn resulted in both a widening of ethno-political cleavages and the destruction of Menelik's efforts to form a natural economic unit on the Horn of Africa. The concepts of nationalism and territoriality can be traced to the early Italian colonial influences while the importation of European mores and technology created a situation of rising expectation and relative deprivation that was to prove beyond Haile Selassie's operational capacity.<sup>110</sup>

The effect of additional external actors on the scene as a result of World War II was paradoxical. On the one hand the international legitimacy gained by Hailie Selassie I, and his ultimate recognition as the primus inter pares among African heads of state, tended to enhance his control and provide him with the means to implement his modernization program. On the other hand, British, Italian and United Nations acquiescence in the resolution of the Ogaden, Haud, and Eritrean questions created a second level colonization on the Horn.

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<sup>110</sup> See Gurr, Ted J., Why Men Rebel, Princeton University press, for amplification of the concept of relative deprivation.

## A. ETHIOPIA

### 1. An International Actor

On 31 January 1942 the first Anglo-Ethiopian agreement after the liberation of Ethiopia stated "Ethiopia is now a free and independent state." However, the area of the Ogaden and the former colony of Eritrea, as well as British and Italian Somaliland, were held in trust by the British until after the war. Many of the ideas regarding nationalism and irridentism implanted by the Italians were to germinate under British rule.

After the war Hailie Selassie was faced with wide spread unrest and rebellion in the countryside. Some of the rebels were motivated by a desire to form their own petty kingdoms, others were simply bandits, but a significant few were questioning the right of Hailie Selassie to rule. In their eyes he had abandoned Ethiopia. By not following the example of Menelik's victory over the Italians, and worse yet, not dying in defeat as did Tewdoros and Johannes, he had forfeited his right to the throne.<sup>111</sup>

By conquest and cooptation the Emperor emerged victorious over the majority of the dissidents. By the early 1950's he was once again firmly in control. His main strengths

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<sup>111</sup>See Greenfield, Ethiopia, pp. 270-312 for an exceptional narrative of what the author calls "Two Decades of Intrigue" immediately after World War II.



and at the same time his greatest weaknesses were a powerful monarchy, which rested on a tradition deeply rooted in a national church, and Ethiopia's ethnic diversity, with its deep social cleavages. Supported by a large, relatively democratic army and surrounded by nobles and bureaucrats who were personally obligated to the monarch for their status, the Emperor was committed to a process of modernization -- but only insofar as it enhanced his own personal power and prestige.<sup>112</sup> Much of the wherewithal to conduct his modernization programs came from the West, and like Ataturk he saw his country's destiny in that direction.

In 1951 the United States replaced Britain as Ethiopias principal supplier of arms and training, and a large aid program was established. A Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG) was established in Addi Ababa in 1952. The quid pro quo for the assistance was twofold -- first, participation in the Korean Conflict, and second, the establishment of a communications center.<sup>113</sup> The Emperor's response to the former was to send troops in support of the United Nations resolution towards Korea.

From 1951 to 1954 the Kagnew Battalion was attached to an American Infantry division in Korea. Over the course of the war more than 5,000 officers and men of the Imperial

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<sup>112</sup>Farer, Thomas, "Statement," Economic & Military Assistance Programs in Africa, House International Relations Committee, 1977, p. 154.

<sup>113</sup>Lefever, Spear and Scepter, p. 138.



Bodyguard served in action against the North Koreans and Chinese. The army had finally become "modern" and the Bodyguard's record in Korea was admirable.<sup>114</sup>

The U.S. Communications Center at Kagnaw Station near Eritrea's capital city of Asmara was a highly classified facility operated by the U.S. Army. It's mission was to serve as a communications relay station to the Middle East and Indian Ocean and to act as a listening post in the same regions. With the advent of satellite technology, the post became less important and shrank from a maximum of about 1,000 personnel to one officer and six enlisted men at the time that it was closed.<sup>115</sup>

Using the reputation he was getting from his Korea venture Hailie Selassie felt that as the head of the "oldest independent nation in Africa" he could become the international spokesman for the continent.

"Eager for active participation in African affairs (in a quest for international stature) the Emperor abandoned the earlier policy of remaining aloof from Negro Africa, from which Ethiopia's Amhara-Tigre elite is separated by ethnic and religious differences."<sup>116</sup>

Ethiopian representatives participated in the Bandung Conference and the 1958 Accra Conference of Independent African States. In 1958 the United Nation's Economic Commission for

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 150

<sup>115</sup>Personal observation of the author.

<sup>116</sup>Lipskey, Ethiopia, p. 228.

Africa was established in Addis Ababa. And as his crowning achievement, the Emperor was instrumental in the establishment of the Organization of African Unity in 1963.<sup>117</sup>

Kaplan views the results of this policy as beneficial:

"The Emperor's establishment of Ethiopia as a major leader of intra-African movements gained him added prestige at home, making him less vulnerable to modernist critics and more attractive to traditionalists who feel he has confirmed Ethiopian superiority."<sup>118</sup>

Be that as it may, it also contributed to rising feelings of hostility toward an Emperor who was a "world leader" but was unable to satisfy his own people.

## 2. The First Coup

In December 1960, with the Emperor in Brazil, the commander of the Imperial Bodyguard, and his brother, the governor of JigJiga attempted to lead some dissatisfied Amaharas in a coup d'etat to depose the Emperor and install a "progressive" regime. Though it only lasted three days, it resulted in the deaths of over 2,000 persons including a number of the Emperor's relatives and closest advisors. The Regular Army, acting on the Emperor's orders, was able to crush the revolt and the ringleaders either committed suicide or were hanged. Greenfield and Lefever sum up the coup and its impact thusly:

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., passim., chapter 13.

<sup>118</sup>Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, pp. 307-308.



"It may be said that in late 1960 and early 1961 Africa's winds of change blew across the High Plateau of Ethiopia bringing a new political awakening."<sup>119</sup>

"Why did the top officers of the Emperor's elite Bodyguard ...turn against him? The answer lies ironically in the very quality and cohesion he deliberately sought in the Bodyguard, and to a considerable extent achieved. The exalted position of its officers, reinforced by their continuing Western contacts, gave them leverage for influence and latitude for discontent. The regular army and the air force were quick to...publicly demand better way. ...a delegation of army officers and men marched on the Imperial Palace...to demand a salary increase. When they reminded the Emperor that they had saved his throne, he had little choice and granted all enlisted men an increase in pay...These successful efforts were followed by continuing and insistant requests for more modern equipment and more foreign training that would result in greater efficiency and enhanced prestige for the armed services. (They) never encroached upon the political sphere or implied the need for any basic change in the economic or political system."<sup>120</sup>

But the time would come when they would. The Emperor's control after the coup attempt was still strong. He demonstrated this strength by making no move to recall the 2,500 Bodyguard troops on duty with United Nations Peacekeeping Forces stationed in the Congo. Once again the Emperor had traded a contribution of manpower for international prestige. The troops were to remain until 1964.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 452. Greenfields entire book leads up to the attempted coup by the Neway brothers and is considered the best available on the topic of the 1960 coup.

<sup>120</sup>Lefever, Spear and Scepter, p.148.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., p. 149-150.



Concurrently, the Emperor was dealing effectively, if not with spectacular success, with the threat of war with Somalia in the south and the Eritrean "rebellion" in the north. The Eritrean situation was, and is, critical to Ethiopia. (The Emperor saw the danger in Ethiopia's total dependence on the rail link to Djibouti and the Red Sea.) The only other ports available, Assab and Massawa, lie in Eritrea.<sup>122</sup> The events leading up to the absorption of Eritrea by Ethiopia will be dealt with in a subsequent section. Suffice it to say that an immediate Eritrean resistance to Ethiopian rule took the form of armed struggle. For the next thirteen years the Emperor, though unable to quell the rebellion, was able to maintain a degree of control in the area. The present government has not been quite as successful, as shall be seen.

The situation in the Ogaden region was not much better. The Somali nationalism fostered by the Italians had taken root. The Somalis were trying to force their claims to the Ogaden and the Kenyan Northern Frontier District. After a series of bloody border clashes in 1960, '64, and '67 in which the Ethiopians were victorious, the conflict simmered down.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, p. 65.

<sup>123</sup>The Somali-Ethiopian dispute will be discussed at length in the Section on Somalia, below.

### 3. The Revolution

By 1974 Ethiopia had become a powder keg ready to explode in any direction. As it turned out it was the armed forces that proved to be the match. The Ethiopian Armed Forces had become the most widely traveled and politically sophisticated group in the country. As a result of their service abroad and attendance at (primarily western) military schools they had become increasingly disenchanted with the apparent uncaring and, to them at least, limited pace of modernization.

In February 1974 their patience exploded with (1) it's discontent with the pace of modernization, (2) their discontent with the conduct of the "war" in Eritrea, and, (3) the Emperor's inability to deal with a major famine which was raging in the northern part of the country. By spring the military had taken control of the government. A coordinating committee was established with both officer and enlisted representatives elected from within the Armed Forces. By September 1974 the Dirgue (shadow), as the committee had come to be called, was no longer content to rule indirectly. The Emperor was deposed and the Dirgue assumed full control.<sup>124</sup> It is not necessary for this analysis to recount the assassinations and executions which came about as a result of infighting for power within the cliques which

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<sup>124</sup> See Thompson, Blair, Ethiopia, The Country That Cut Off It's Head, Robson Books, 1975 for a journalist's account of the events surrounding the Dirgue's rise to power.



formed the Dirgue.<sup>125</sup> It is sufficient to know that the Marxist elements (with decided Maoist tendencies) were able to consolidate power and eliminate the conservative and moderate elements in the group.<sup>126</sup>

#### 4. Enter the Soviet Union

By 1977 the United States found itself in the unenviable position of supplying arms to an increasingly Marxist and repressive regime. The Congress took action to disengage gradually, early in that year, but the Dirgue was quicker on the draw. The MAAG was ordered out of the country in May 1977. The Defense Attache's Office followed along with approximately half of the Embassy staff on 4 June 1977.<sup>127</sup> With their departure all U.S. Military assistance and representation to Ethiopia ended.

As mentioned earlier, Ethiopia is critically dependent on the Franco-Ethiopian Railway to the port of Djibouti and overland routes to the ports of Assab and Massawa, both

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<sup>125</sup>The Dirgue has had three Chairmen -- the first two General Andom and General Taferi were assassinated by the supporters of the third -- Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. I had personal knowledge of over 400 assassinations or executions during my stay in Ethiopia and have seen estimates which indicate that of the original two hundred members of the Dirgue only seven are alive today. For a view of the repressive techniques used by the Dirgue see: Meyer-Lie, Arnt K, "Statement," Economic and Military Assistance, Programs in Africa, pp. 167-175.

<sup>126</sup>Randolph, R. Sean, "A Hand in the Pie: Ethiopia, Benin, and the Guineas," Sino-Soviet Intervention in Africa, Roger Pearson (ed), Council on American Affairs, 1977, p. 70.

<sup>127</sup>The author was expelled with the Defense Attache's Office and left on 3 June 1977.



in Eritrea. These three ports are her only links to the sea and the rest of the world. Both the railway and the over-land routes to Eritrea have been arenas of conflict in recent days. The Somali uprisings in the Ogaden have cut the link to Djibouti -- an already tenuous link due to the tendency of that country's majority toward Somalia. And the Arab backed secessionist war in Eritrea appeared to be on the verge of success. In addition to the conflicts in the Ogaden and Eritrea, Ethiopia was attempting to deal with at least four other major, organized revolts in other parts of the country.<sup>128</sup>

Faced with the departure, at their own request, of their only arms supplier, the Dirgue increased it's Marxist orientation and began to appeal for Soviet assistance in the "ongoing peoples revolution." The Soviets were now in a dilemma, from 1945 to 1974 they had attempted to penetrate Ethiopia on numerous occasions. The Emperor had been sufficiently astute to know the direction from which his support was coming and had played them off against the United States. Their rhetoric had returned to haunt them. Their problem now was how to continue the strong relationship they had with Somalia while supporting the Somali's worst enemy. The

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<sup>128</sup>They are (1) Oromo Liberation Front - Southwestern Provinces; (2) Ethiopian Democratic Union - Gojam and Begemidir Provinces; (3) Tigre Liberation Front - Tigre Province; Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party - Addis Ababa and Shoa Province.

manner in which they solved (or didn't solve) the problem will be discussed below. Suffice it to say they tried to satisfy both.

The Soviets apparently saw the lessening requirement for Kagnew Station and the concurrent drawdown of US personnel as a weakness rather than the conscious withdrawal from an area no longer vital to U.S. interests that it was. The Soviet Union had successfully countered U.S. involvement on the Horn, but at this point it was debatable whether or not the U.S. had any real interest in the area. The renversement of the Soviets has been a costly one. Not only have they pumped nearly a billion dollars in arms into Ethiopia but they have sacrificed very important and costly facilities in Somalia.

## B. SOMALIA

### 1. Irridentism

The Somali remain largely a pastoral people. Of the 4,000,000 Somalis, an estimated 3,000,000 live within the borders of the Somali Democratic Republic. The remaining million are settled, or lead nomadic existences, in territory claimed by neighboring countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti.<sup>129</sup> This becomes an important point when one considers that deeply affecting every Somali is an irridentism with it's roots in a traditional Moslem nationalism and the Italian colonial experience. One must understand this factor in order to fully understand Somali objectives.

An examination of the countries which comprise sub-Saharan Africa will reveal that virtually all of them are states rather than nations. Generally, they lack any uniform national culture that will transcend internal ethnic divisions. Mr. I.M. Lewis sums up the main concern of most African leaders as follows:

"The abiding preoccupation of most African statesmen is with internal "nation-building," with the foundation and development of an integrative national culture that will transform their politically independent states into culturally distinctive nations."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, Africa South of the Sahara, p. 719 Europa Publications, 1974.

<sup>130</sup> I.M. Lewis, "The Politics of the 1969 Somali Coup," The Journal of Modern African Studies, (10, 3), p. 384, 1972.



On the other hand, the Somali perceptions are illustrated by Prime Minister Abdullahi 'Ise:

"The Somali form a single race, practice the same religion, and speak a single language. They inhabit a vast territory which, in its turn constitutes a well defined geographic unit. All must know that the Government of Somalia will strive its utmost with the legal and peaceful means which are its democratic prerogative to attain this end: The union of Somalis, until all Somali form a single Great Somalia."<sup>131</sup> (emphasis added)

The uniqueness of the Somali is further elaborated in additional remarks by Mr. Lewis:

"The special predicament of the Somali, then, remains that whereas other independent African States seek to make themselves into nations, they seek to build a state on the basis of their nationhood."<sup>132</sup>

Prior to colonization in the mid-nineteenth century, the Somali were divided into nomadic clans which roamed the Horn of Africa with their flocks and herds. Their only concession to authority was to Islam, and, in the sixteenth century to Ahmed Gagn.

The modern history of the country may be said to have begun in the late nineteenth century when the British and Italians began their slow colonization of the Somali coast.

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<sup>131</sup> Abdullahi 'Ise, Policy Statement to the National Assembly, Mogadishu, 26 Jul 59, quoted by I.M. Lewis, "Pan-Africanism and Pan-Somalism," p. 150, The Journal of Modern African Studies, (1, 2), 1963.

<sup>132</sup> Lewis, I.M., *ibid.*, p. 161.

At the end of World War II the British were charged with administering all of present day Somalia as well as parts of Ethiopia. However in 1949 the United Nations placed the former colony of Italian Somaliland under trusteeship to Italy. The Italian Trust Territory made excellent progress toward self government and in 1960 the British and Italian trusteeships were granted independence. They merged to form the Somali Republic on 1 July 1960. The new nation formed a government on the western model and adopted a blue flag with a white five pointed star. Each point on the star represents an area occupied by Somalis. The Somali say "two of the five are so far independent."<sup>133</sup> From the outset the government adopted a policy completely opposite that of most African nations, a policy of expansion of the state to fully encompass the Somali nation.<sup>134</sup>

## 2. The Soviet Entry and the 1969 Coup

In 1963 the domestic pressure to regain the lost territories began to increase and the Somalis sought more aid. A tripartite offer (West Germany, Italy and the United States) of \$18 million in military assistance was refused because of:

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<sup>133</sup>Davidson, Basil "Somalia in 1975: Some Notes and Impressions," Issue, p. 20, Spring 1975. The five areas are former British and Italian Somaliland, Ethiopia's Ogaden regions, The Northern Frontier District of Kenya and Djibouti.

<sup>134</sup>See Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Somalia and Lewis, I.M., The Modern History of Somaliland, for Somali history up to independence.

"Quantitative and qualitative inadequacies and above all, because of the political conditions which accompanied it."<sup>135</sup>

The main problem with the offer was that it only provided for light arms and transport for five to six thousand men, (in order not to offend Ethiopia) and that it was provided on the condition that Somalia would agree to accept arms from no other source.<sup>136</sup> This was the opening the Soviet Union was waiting for -- military aid worth \$30 million to equip and expand the Somali army to twenty thousand men was offered and accepted. By 1966 over 600 Somalis were in training in the Soviet Union and a 250 man Soviet mission was operating in Somalia.<sup>137</sup> The reluctance of bordering states to cede territory led to actual fighting with Ethiopia and Kenya in 1964. Periodic confrontations occurred with fair regularity along both borders. This irridentist policy was pursued with varying degrees of militancy, albeit without success, until 1967.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Foreign Military Sales and Assistance Facts, p. 26, DSAA, 1975.

<sup>136</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. Arms Trade with the Third World, pp. 654-655, Almqvist & Wiskell, 1971.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid., p. 655.

<sup>138</sup>A detailed account of events leading up to and during the 1964 conflict can be found in Drysdale's The Somali Dispute.



In that year the government adopted a new policy. Detente with Ethiopia and Kenya and a decision to seek peaceful settlement of Somali claims to the "missing territories" was the new name of the game.<sup>139</sup> With the absence of an external threat to provide a stimulus for national solidarity, a re-emergence of small group particularism among the lineage groups and clans began to erode the government.<sup>140</sup>

On 15 October 1969 the President of the Republic was assassinated. When it became apparent that there would be no real change in the government with the selection of a successor, the Army decided to act. In a bloodless coup on 21 October 1969 Major General Siad Barre led the army in seizing control. The state was to be governed by a Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). The SRC stated it would honor all existing treaties and commitments, would support national liberation movements worldwide, and announced that henceforth the country would be known as the Somali Democratic Republic.<sup>141</sup>

Siad quickly assumed control of the SRC and it's policies and programs must be seen as principally his work. Under his direction, the regime spent it's first year in an

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<sup>139</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Somalia," Deadline Data on World Affairs, p. 32, McGraw-Hill Publications, 1970.

<sup>140</sup> Davidson, "Somalia in 1975," pp. 20-21.

<sup>141</sup> See Lewis, I.M., "The Politics of the 1969 Somali Coup," for an extremely detailed and insightful account of events up to the end of the first year of Siad's leadership.

intense program to gain control of the people. Siad believes that without change Somalia is doomed to political anarchy and economic stagnation. He saw the people as the key then, as he does now, and he set about to change the society of Somalia. Siad announced to the Somali people, and to the world, in January 1971 that henceforth Somalia would adopt "scientific socialism" as its orbit of reference.<sup>142</sup>

Siad recognized that he was faced with poverty, climatological uncertainties, limited natural resources, a lack of infrastructure, and a turbulent nomadic population. He also recognized the strong sense of national identity and traditional self reliance of the Somali as a valuable asset to his plans.

Somalia's development campaign rested on policies and programs that were felt necessary to modify the factors which impeded her development. Siad had modified the government and established control with the SRC and was therefore able to carefully lay his plans for the restructuring of Somali society. Siad identified three of those programs as crucial:

(1) The mobilization of the people in support of governmental policy - the ultimate goal of which remained the establishment of "Greater Somalia."

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<sup>142</sup>Davidson, "Somalia in 1975," p. 21.



(2) A literacy program including development of a written form of the Somali language. The complete literization of the population would follow. Siad saw this as the first step in politicization of the people.

(3) A long range (15 years) resettlement program encompassing land reform and reclamation, communal farming and the winning over of the nomadic population to agriculture.

The completion of these three programs would, in Siad's eyes, lay the base for industrialization and movement into the modern world. It would also, of course, provide a viable socio-economic core to which the "missing territories" might be attached.<sup>143</sup> All that was required was aid.

Although the Soviets had provided support since before the coup, the extent of the involvement did not appreciably increase until 1971. In that year the U.S. and West Germany were still operating Aid Missions in Somalia and providing other than military assistance. Somalia's small merchant fleet was conducting trade with North Vietnam. In 1971 the aid allocations for Somalia were tied to the cessation of that trade. The Somalia rejected what they saw as blackmail and the U.S. mission was withdrawn.<sup>144</sup> The Soviets were only too happy to increase the extent of their involvement, particularly in view of their growing interest in the Indian Ocean and Africa.

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<sup>143</sup> Lewis, "Politics of the 1969 Somali Coup," p. 403.

<sup>144</sup> Economic and Military Assistance Programs in Africa, p. 24.



### 3. Drought

1974 began as a very proud year for the SRC and President Siad Barre. While his programs were succeeding, Somalia became the twentieth member of the Arab League;<sup>145</sup> her ties with the West seemed to be improving with contacts being developed with Italy and the EEC;<sup>146</sup> and the Russians as well as the Chinese were actively courting her friendship.<sup>147</sup>

All that was lacking was rain -- since 1969 Somalia had not had a year of normal rainfall -- and by mid-1974 it became apparent that the traditional Somalia, "the land of sheiks and warriors," had come to the end of the road.

By January 1975 the government had stripped it's foreign exchange reserves, plunged \$105 million into payment deficit and had shelved ongoing programs in a literal "do or die" battle against the worst drought the country had ever seen.<sup>148</sup> With over half of Somalia's livestock dead from lack of water, over 250,000 nomadic tribesmen came to re-settlement camps and relief centers seeking aid and a new

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<sup>145</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. "Somalia" Deadline Data, p. 39.

<sup>146</sup> Davidson, "Somalia in 1975," p. 25.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 25. The Chinese at this time were involved in road construction to the tune of \$64 million, a significant factor in continued Soviet interest in Somalia.

<sup>148</sup> MacManus, James, "Drought Spurs Political Progress in Somalia," The Washington Post, p. unk, 31 March 1975.

life, the old life had died of thirst.<sup>149</sup> In the long run the drought benefitted the SRC programs by depriving the nomads of the option to return to the old life without reflecting adversely on the SRC. But, the short run impact was bankruptcy of the country.<sup>150</sup> The SRC did everything it could with all it had, yet the means available to it were small. Siad Barre recognized this:

"This disaster means help on a big scale. Help on a scale that Somalia cannot provide for itself, technically or materially."<sup>151</sup>

To add insult to injury, in February 1974 the relatively stable Empire of Ethiopia began to crumble. The Somali began to see an irrational and radical government at the head of their traditional enemy. In Somali eyes this Western supported military government was a threat to Somalia's claim to the "missing territories" and a threat to the Somalis who inhabited the Ogaden. The conflicting claims of both nations to the French held Territory of Afars

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<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

<sup>150</sup>Decrane, Phillipe, "Somalia Goes it Alone," The Guardian, p. unk, 12 April 1975.

<sup>151</sup>Davidson, "Somalia in 1975," p. 25.



and Issas with its port of Djibouti also loomed large as a potential causus belli.<sup>152</sup> Prudence dictated that Somalia prepare for the worst.

Appeals for drought assistance were met from a number of sources. The EEC, U.N. World Food Program and the United States all provided foodstuffs.<sup>153</sup> The response of the Arab League was disappointing -- only Libya responded.<sup>154</sup> The greatest aid, however, came from the Soviet Union. Exact dollar amounts are not readily available, but large numbers of personnel and equipment as well as large amounts of supplies were furnished to the Somalis. With the aid of the Soviets the government felt capable of handling the domestic problems generated by the drought -- but what of the military ones?

#### 4. A Soviet Client State?

In July 1974 President Podgorny of the Soviet Union visited Somalia and the two nations signed a "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" which included a substantial increase in military assistance.<sup>155</sup> The Soviets had long

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<sup>152</sup> At the time Djibouti was not independent and most analysts speculated that conflict would erupt between Ethiopia and Somalia over the territory upon the French withdrawal. The French have remained militarily and the ultimate answer on this question is still in doubt.

<sup>153</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . "Somalia," Africa, p. 65; Nr 51-Nov 75.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ . "Russia Go Home," Christian Science Monitor, 15 Nov 77, p. 9.



been the sole arms supplier and primary aid donor to the Somalis but this treaty had the effect of formalizing an alliance and to many observers placed the Somalis irrevocably in the Soviet Camp.<sup>156</sup>

In the winter of 1974-75 Soviet influence in Somalia approached domination. By 1975 the original small scale military training programs had increased tremendously in size and scope. The intransigence of the West in 1963 and again in 1971 had left Somalia with no choice but the Soviets.

During the period 1971 to 1976 Soviet military aid to Somalia (\$132 million) exceeded that of any other African country except Egypt, and economic aid (\$32 million) was ranked fourth after Egypt, Algeria, and Guinea.<sup>157</sup> In addition to training programs, the Soviets had made Somalia's army the fourth strongest, and only fully mechanized, army on the continent. The Air Force was modernized with MIG's. The only drawback from a Somali viewpoint, was that the armed forces were totally dependent on the Soviet Union for fuel and spare parts.<sup>158</sup> If one considers that in addition to all this, the Soviet Union was also the main

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<sup>156</sup> It is significant that the Soviets have concluded treaties of this type with only five other nations, they are: Egypt, Iraq, India, Angola, and Mozambique.

<sup>157</sup> . "Soviet, Cuban Aid in Africa," Los Angeles Times, 30 Jan 76, p. 1.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

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THE HORN OF AFRICA: HISTORICAL PATTERNS CONFLICT AND STRATEGIC --ETC(U)

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trading partner for Somalia, and that it has been estimated that Somalia was dependent on the Soviets for 64 percent of her national budget, perhaps domination is not a strong enough word.<sup>159</sup>

Siad insisted that Somalia was not a Soviet satellite, that the Russians had made no demands, and that they were nothing more than friends whose only desire was to help the Somali. But the presence of Soviet naval facilities in Berbera, on Somali soil, and an estimated 3,000 Soviet and Cuban "technicians" in early 1977 seemed to give the lie to Siad's pronouncement.<sup>160</sup>

The fact of the matter was that the Soviets (and most of the world) felt that they had gained an economic stranglehold on Somalia. They perceived their control to be enhanced by the fact that the army was logistically dependent on the Soviet Union. The exception to this view was the Saudi Arabians who began attempting to woo Somalia toward a more nonaligned path.

##### 5. The Red Exodus

In March 1977 (and possibly earlier) the Soviet Union was "invited" to help the Provisional Military Government of

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<sup>159</sup> . "Afriscope Interviews Somali Head of State," Afriscope, p. 47, Jun 74.

<sup>160</sup> Interview, the author and Mr. Martin Jacobs, Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy, Somalia, in Addis Ababa 14 Feb 77.



Socialist Ethiopia in it's struggle with reactionary and counter-revolutionary movements.<sup>161</sup> The Soviets allegedly agreed to provide a program of military aid estimated at \$500 million. In April the Dirgue demanded that the U.S. Military Advisory Group be withdrawn, as has been discussed.

Although the Soviets did not openly throw their full weight behind the Ethiopians at this point, Siad -- and the Somlai people -- began to express concern for their interests in the Ogaden. On 17 May 1977 Siad began to criticize publicly Soviet perfidy (and the first Cubans who were settling down in Addis Ababa).<sup>162</sup> His protests were to no avail since by June the Dirgue had directed the expulsion of the U.S. Defense Attache and demanded a reduction in American presence. The Soviets could not resist the temptation to fill the vacuum.

In supporting Ethiopia the Soviets seriously misjudged Somalia. The Somali were not interested in the same goal as the Soviet Union -- i.e. their only interest was the "lost territories." In July the Somali living in the Ogaden began their own war of liberation, and the SRC began supporting them with both troops and arms.

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<sup>161</sup>Many of the assertions made in this portion of the paper are based on personal observation and reports while assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa from August 1976 to June 1977.

<sup>162</sup>Authors personal observation.

The Soviet reaction was to halt arms shipments to Somalia and increase assistance to Ethiopia. Siad visited Moscow in August to try to resolve the situation but apparently failed. On his return he began to pay closer attention to Saudi, Iranian, and U.S. comments and veiled offers of aid. The payoff came on 15 November 1977 - the unthinkable happened -- the Soviet Union and Cuba were directed to eliminate their military presence (diplomatic as well for the Cubans). The Soviet-Somali Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was abrogated and the Soviets and Cubans went to Ethiopia.

#### C. ERITREA

##### 1. Colony to Independence

The Italian presence in Eritrea ended in 1941 when the British invaded and liberated the colony from the Italians. They stayed for eleven years. Initially, the British were unprepared for occupation duty and as a result many of the officers in the Italian administration remained in their posts.<sup>163</sup> Consequently the basic day to day operation of the colony remained unchanged until 1943.

In that year the British began two programs which were to have a major effect on the by now growing national identity of the Eritreans. The first of these was the

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<sup>163</sup>Trevaskis, Eritrea, p. 21. It should be noted that this work is the definitive study of the British trusteeship and the early years of the Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation.

"Eritreanization" of the colony. A crash program to replace Italian administrators and appointees with Eritreans got underway in which the people were "encouraged to think for themselves and assume responsibility."<sup>164</sup> An expanded educational system was established using Tigre or Arabic as the language of instruction, depending on the linguistic background of the majority within the school district. In some cases even dialects were used. These programs were highly successful with adults as well as with children attending in many cases.<sup>165</sup>

The politicization of Eritrea was the second major project. Although responsible self-government took somewhat longer to establish itself in the minds of the people, by the time Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia in 1952, several co-existing political parties were in operation.<sup>166</sup> In short, Eritrea enjoyed a degree of political autonomy and sophistication exceeding that known in Ethiopia.

The years of British rule were years of indecision and argument regarding the future of the former colony. Most proposals for resolving the dilemma were politically motivated.

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>166</sup>Hess, Ethiopia, p. 120.



Ethiopia was pro-annexation;<sup>167</sup> the Italians felt they should return to administer the colony and guide it to independence;<sup>168</sup> the British were in no hurry to leave;<sup>169</sup> even the Russians advanced a claim for the right to administer the region;<sup>170</sup> and finally the United States, having established a presence in Asmara, sided with Ethiopians.<sup>171</sup> When the decision was finally taken to ask the Eritreans, they, too, not surprisingly, were divided. The majority of the Christians tended to favor a union of some sort with Ethiopia. The Moslem sector generally favored independence. It is probable that the majority of the population in 1952 favored some form of partnership with Ethiopia.<sup>172</sup>

It fell to the United Nations to determine Eritrea's fate. On 2 December 1952 the General Assembly resolved that Eritrea should be federated with Ethiopia by a vote of 42 to 10.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 303.

<sup>168</sup>Kaplan et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, p. 64.

<sup>169</sup>Gilkes, Patrick, The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia, p. 93, St. Martin's Press, 1975.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, p. 303.

## 2. The Emperor Takes Charge

The United Nations Federation scheme gave Eritrea local autonomy and it's own political institutions while assuring Ethiopia secure access to the sea and full control over the defense, foreign affairs, currency and port administration of the territory. The federation proved to be a political disaster. The Eritrean Parliament, noted for it's political activity, was in sharp contrast to it's Ethiopian counterpart. The lack of free political institutions in the Ethiopian state was apparent. In the 1950's, splits developed between the Emperor's representative in Asmara and the Eritrean government. Complaints were heard of violations of local autonomy, use of tax funds for Imperial rather than local interest, and suppression of criticism by the Addis government.<sup>174</sup>

In reply to the criticisms mentioned above (and others) the Emperor's Viceroy in Asmara stated in 1955:

"there are no internal nor external affairs as far as the office of His Imperial Majesty's Representative is concerned, and there will be none in the future. The affairs of Eritrea concern Ethiopia as a whole and the Emperor."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Greenfield, Ethiopia, passim. This work has a very well researched chapter on the failure of the Federation.

<sup>175</sup>Luther, Ethiopia Today, p. 147.

The Emperor and his government applied their leverage and by 1962 -- largely through bribery, patronage, and coercion -- they had emasculated the Eritrean Parliament which: "was persuaded to vote itself out of existence."<sup>176</sup> The next day the Eritrean Liberation Front was born and the war of secession begun.<sup>177</sup>

### 3. Rebellion in the North

"A small number of the province's Tigrean Christian majority allied themselves with the E.L.F. because they saw themselves as discriminated against by the more numerous and politically more powerful Shoan Amhara in the central government. In addition there was some sympathy for the E.L.F. among radical students, some of whom viewed them as fellow opponents of the Emperor."<sup>178</sup>

The adherence of a small number of Christians allowed the E.L.F. to claim that it represented a cross-section of the Eritrean people, though it remained closely tied to the Arab-Muslim world. Its dominant ideologies were nationalism, pan-Arabism, and Islam until younger and more radical elements implanted Marxist-Leninist philosophy in the mid-1960's.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Gilkes, The Dying Lion, p. 195

<sup>177</sup> Darnton, John, "Eritrean Rebel Army Set for Decisive Test," New York Times, p. 8, 11 Jul 77.

<sup>178</sup> Kaplan, et al, Area Handbook for Ethiopia, p. 304.

<sup>179</sup> Legum, Colin and Lee, Bill, Conflict in the Horn of Africa, p. 23, Rex Collings, 1977.



This mixture of ideological, religious and, to some extent, personality differences, resulted in internal divisions and by 1971 two separate and distinct factions had been created. The new group was known as the People's Liberation Front (PLF). Both groups were definitely leftist in orientation with the PLF being the more Marxist of the two. The PLF also split when the more Muslim elements formed the Eritrean Liberation Front - Popular Liberation Forces (ELF-PLF).<sup>180</sup>

All three of the major factions have received support from the Arab world. Principal backers have included Egypt (until 1967), Saudia Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, and Libya all of whom have contributed moral support, arms, and cash. More recent supporters include South Yemen, Tunisia, and Kuwait. Connections have also been formed with the Palistine Liberation Organization by the PLF.<sup>181</sup>

Hailie Selassie was never successful in putting down the Eritrean rebellion, but he was able to maintain a degree of control in the area. Subsequent to his ouster the situation deteriorated and by 1977 the only hindrance to victory were the deep divisions within the ranks of the Eritreans. All the major cities had been lost by the Ethiopians except Asmara and their hold there was tenuous at best.

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<sup>180</sup> See Legum and Lee, Conflict in the Horn of Africa, pp. 20-27 for a review of the Arab involvement in Eritrea.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 55-57.

After an abortive invasion by a "peasant army" the Dirgue attempted to resolve the issue with a "Nine Point Peace Plan" which was rejected by the Eritreans and the Arab states. The Eritreans had by now progressed beyond agreements -- the only acceptable terms were complete independence.<sup>182</sup>

The successes of the Eritreans continued throughout 1976 and 1977. In July of 1977 the three major factions agreed to the formation of a "democratic national front."<sup>183</sup> At this point the existence of an Eritrean national identity is no longer questionable; in fact, Eritrea had become a "stateless nation." The question now is: will that national identity be realized in a nation-state, and will it survive?

The Cubans and Soviets seem to have been particularly reticent about assisting the Ethiopians in a military solution to the Eritrean question. Although Cuban troops have been involved in action in the north -- the Cuban-Soviet support has simply not reached the levels of the Ogaden conflict. It is doubtful that it will -- aiding in resisting aggression is one thing and the suppression of a minority in someone else's country is another.

It appears that the Soviets would welcome almost any non-military solution to the problem of Eritrea because

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., p. 86, in effect the plan was to establish a commission to mediate a peace and in the meantime return to the status of the old federation.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid.



of it's importance to stability in the region and the fact that the ports the Soviets covet are located there. Until the question is resolved, the Soviets will be unable to get on with the business of consolidating their foothold on the Horn and attaining the objectives that prompted their involvement in the first place. Those objectives will be discussed in the next chapter.

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The rapidity of the collapse of the Ethiopian Empire and it's replacement by a Marxist government; the humiliation of the Soviet superpower by a country of 3 million nomads who heretofore had been totally dependent on the largest of the Soviet Union; the independence of Djibouti, the last true colony in Africa; and the ongoing struggle of peoples who feel themselves colonized in Eritrea and the Ogaden; are the stuff of high drama indeed -- a social and political upheaval that rivals in scope the great revolutions of earlier times. Yet, unlike other great social changes and revolutions which began internally, external actors (or non-actors) have been the catalysts for events on the Horn.

It was as a result of the intrusion of Western technology and ideas that the armed forces of Hailie Selassie developed a modernization gap with the rest of the Empire. The generation of a new cross-ethnic elite committed to the remaking of the social order made the downfall of the Empire inevitable.



The colonial heritage of Eritrea and Somalia derived from the Italians and the British and, exacerbated by Marxian ideas of social reform and economy, prompted the Somali irridentism and the Eritrean separatism which proved, and continues to prove, destabilizing to the Horn of Africa.

The absence of firm support by the United States on the one hand and the tremendous influx of Soviet military assistance on the other made any attempt to stop the Somali irridentist move impossible. And, once begun, the relative impotence of the Organization of African Unity and the conflict between Soviet and Arab strategies relative to the entire region made escalation of both the Somali and Eritrean conflicts inevitable.

V. MUSICAL CHAIRS ON THE HORN:  
THE NATIONAL INTERESTS

Until last year the ties between the Soviet Union and Somalia were balanced by United States ties to Ethiopia. The French (who controlled Djibouti until June 1977) bent with the witn to ensure the balance held steady. That balance has now changed dramatically and has forced a reassessment of interests on the Horn and cannot fail to have some impact on foreign policies of the actors toward Africa, and the rest of the world.

This chapter will examine the national interests of the actors on the Horn of Africa. What is the national interest; and how and why does it change? These are questions often asked and rarely answered satisfactorily. James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff respond to the first question thusly:

(The national interest is) "One of the most frequently invoked criteria by which policymakers attempt to formulate policies...This concept,...,is generally admitted to be an illusive one, having both a fixed and a variable content. The fixed and irreducible content...would normally include the preservation of the nation as an independent political community...The variable content is a function of myriad factors - the traditional mythos, or set of ideals,...the personality of political leaders, the differing political philosophies of rival political parties, international conditions...contemporary trends in public opinion, the impact of changing technology, and so forth."<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>James Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations, p. 321, J.B. Lippincott Co., 1971.

Professor Frank Teti sees national interest in terms of objectives, "without which there is no need to evaluate or formulate policy."<sup>185</sup>

This examination of the paramount objectives of the actors on the Horn will only address what appear to be the most salient variables and of necessity will concentrate on the main actors. Threaded throughout the discussion will be comments on the strategic value of the area, the impact of technology on its cultures, and situational factors. Much of the analysis will be colored by personal observations and experiences encountered by the author while assigned to the Defense Attache's Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from August 1976 to June 1977.

#### A. THE UNITED STATES

That the U.S. had substantial interests on the Horn at one time has been substantiated earlier in this work. The need for allies during the Korean War, the requirement for a communications site at Kagnaw Station, and the need to deploy weapons systems in the Indian Ocean all militated toward involvement in the Horn. As time passed the concern for resupply routes to Israel, an unwillingness to cut off the Emperor (our oldest ally in Africa) and the affection

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<sup>185</sup>Teti, Frank, "Lecture on the National Interest," Naval Postgraduate School, 9 Nov 77.



and admiration that most Americans felt for "brave Ethiopia," were instrumental in maintaining the view that the U.S. had vital national interests in the area. Most significant of all and perhaps the only real reason for continued U.S. interest, was the perception of spreading Soviet influence and the desire to contain it.

The United States has no treaties, no real economic interests, and no strong cultural ties with any of the countries on the Horn. It appears that the ability of the U.S. to face the Soviets in the Indian Ocean in a naval sense is more than sufficient at the present time. And certainly, the countries of the Horn do not pose a threat to the survival of the United States. Some would cite the importance to Israel of free movement through the Red Sea as a reason for remaining deeply involved in the Horn. That importance may be overemphasized. The Israelis have sufficient stocks of fuel to last for any conceivable conventional war in the Mideast. By the time that fuel becomes a problem to them, it seems logical to assume that the superpowers would be involved, if not actually engaged, and at that point the Red Sea Routes would become a rather low priority issue. Given the above -- does the United States have a national interests in the Horn of Africa?

It would appear that the answer is yes -- writ small. The interest is not so much in the countries of the Horn but with the ability of actors (particularly the Soviets) and

events on the Horn to influence other parts of the globe where we do have vital interests, e.g. Southern Africa, the Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula. The ability of the Soviets to use the Horn as a springboard for projecting power elsewhere in the region is the vital concern.

It should be apparent at this point that United States national interests in the region, once satellites had effectively replaced the Kagnaw Station facility, have been limited to reactions to Soviet initiatives and vaguely worded references to "stability in the area." Soviet interests seem to be another matter, and insofar as U.S. interests seem to be directly related to soviet actions, it is necessary to examine the goals of the Soviet Union.<sup>186</sup>

#### B. THE SOVIET UNION

The common knowledge would have it that the Soviet Union has three major goals on the Horn: (1) to provide a counterweight to U.S. influence in the area; (2) to develop the capability of projecting Soviet power, in peace and war, into the African Continent and the Indian Ocean; and (3) to support and assist those nations who have chosen to follow the Marxist path, i.e. to live up to Soviet ideological commitments.

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<sup>186</sup>See Farer, Tom, Warclouds on the Horn of Africa for a discussion of the declining U.S. interests in the Horn.

### 1. Counter U.S. Influence

It has been related in the last chapter that the Soviets had successfully countered United States involvement in the Horn of Africa -- but, at this point it was questionable whether or not the United States had any real desire to remain "on the ground" in what was beginning to look like a no win situation.

### 2. Projection of Power

Most opinions of Soviet intentions on the Horn prior to 1977 tended to stress the facilities formerly held by the Soviets in Somalia, as the key to U.S. - Soviet naval competition in the area. A closer examination results in a somewhat different conclusion.

"If western facilities in the Indian Ocean are lumped together...they constitute a far more substantial infrastructure than the Russians have been able to assemble."<sup>187</sup>

This statement would seem to support the idea that in time of major conventional conflict that Western naval power could be deployed in the Indian Ocean in overwhelming amounts. And, in the case of a direct confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the Indian Ocean will probably not be a theatre of major importance. What then is the relationship between the Horn and Soviet objectives in the Indian Ocean?

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<sup>187</sup>Farer, "Statement," Economic and Military Assistance Programs in Africa, p. 158.



a. Apparent Soviet Objectives in the Indian Ocean

Since 1968 the Soviet Union has deployed a relatively small number of combatant vessels in the Indian Ocean. Their number rarely exceeds ten except during regional crises. Examples of increased strength occurred during the war between India and Pakistan (six surface and six submarines)<sup>188</sup> and during the 1973 Middle East conflict. It appears, qualitatively and quantitatively, that Russian naval activity in the area is directed toward maintaining a small force which can be rapidly enlarged during times of crises or tensions. Since 1975 the Soviets have also conducted long range reconnaissance flights over the region.

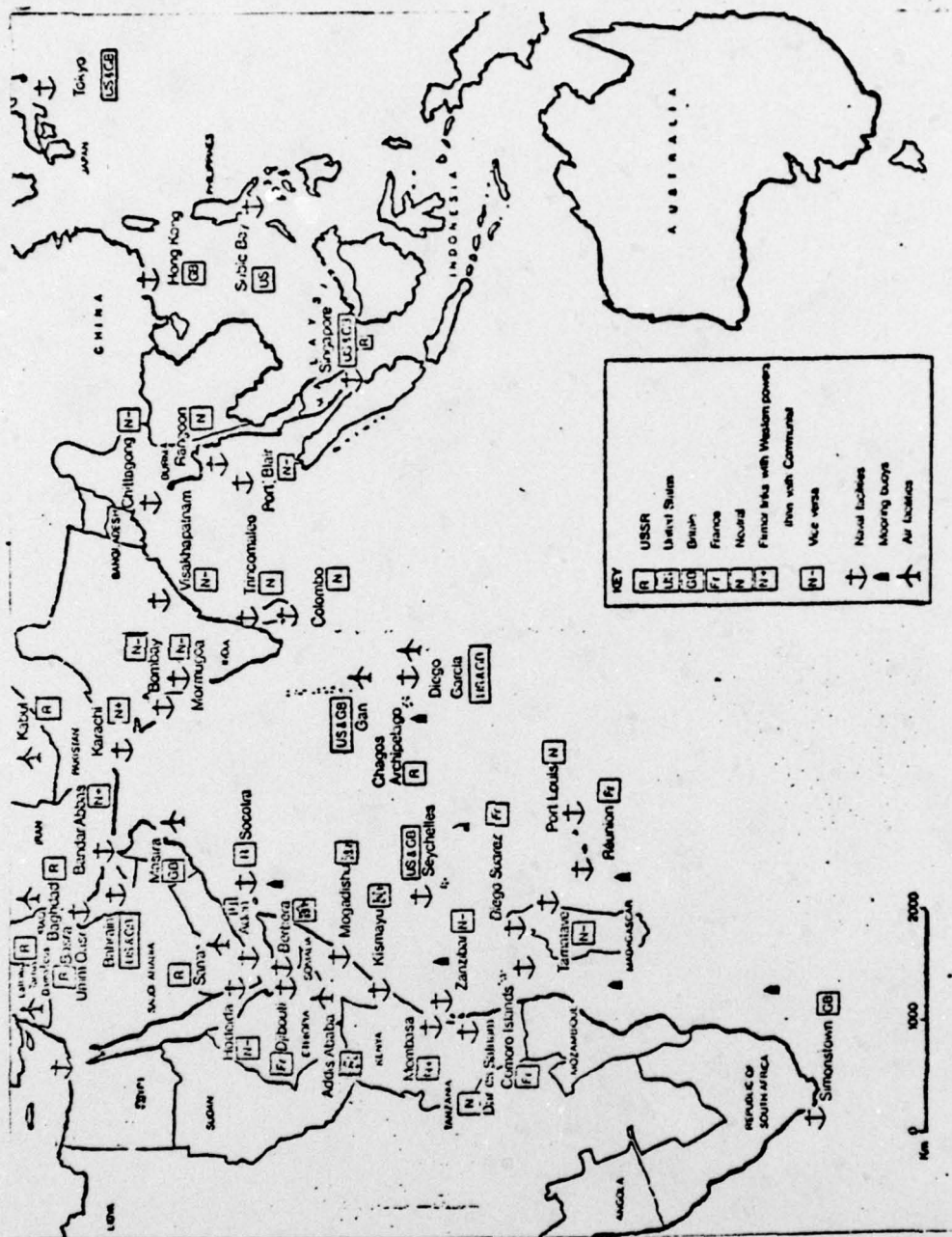
Some analysis feel that Soviet reenforcement above the normal six to ten vessels has been in response to U.S. deployments into the region, rather than an attempt to influence littoral states during crises.<sup>189</sup>

Soviet anchorages and facilities are maintained at a number of locations on the Indian Ocean or its two major appendages, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The map on page 113 locates Soviet facilities as well as those used by Western powers. Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean can be assessed as being of five military and three political which are:

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<sup>188</sup> Tahtinen, Dale R., assisted by John Lenczowski, Arms in the Indian Ocean: Interests and Challenges, p. 17, American Enterprise Institute for Publishing Political Research, 1977.

<sup>189</sup> Bezboruah, Monoranjan, U.S. Strategy in the Indian Ocean, pp. 131-132, Praeger Publishers, 1977.



MAP 5 - Naval & Air  
Facilities in the  
Indian Ocean

Source: The Indian Ocean and  
the Threat to the West, Patrick  
Wall (ed) (London: Stacy  
International), 1975, pp.  
16-17.

## Military

### (1) Interdiction of enemy shipping in time of war or crisis:

"...the Russians are positioning their naval forces to enable them to interfere with the shipment of oil from the Persian Gulf. This capability would subject the Western European allies to the mercy of the Soviet Union because most of these countries depend on Persian Gulf petroleum for their industries and homes, and, in some cases, nearly their entire economies. The same vulnerability threatens America's most important East Asian ally, Japan."<sup>190</sup>

### (2) Protection of Soviet merchant and fishing vessels:

"The Indian Ocean has come to figure prominently in Soviet economic calculations. The Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean is indicative of Russia's growing economic ties with the region. The commercial and trade relations with the Indian Ocean countries necessitate a show of Soviet presence in the waters...The Indian Ocean sea-lanes, that is, a secure and steady access to them, have become an important part of the Soviet Union's Indian Ocean configurations."<sup>191</sup>

### (3) Ensuring lines of communication:

"...the geographic necessity to maintain the communication line between the European and East Asian parts of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Navy is divided into four fleet areas: the Arctic, the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Pacific areas. Assured connection between the three European fleets and the Pacific fleet can only be maintained through the Indian Ocean."<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup>Tahinen, Arms in the Indian Ocean, pp. 20-21.

<sup>191</sup>Bezboruah, U.S. Strategy, p. 132.

<sup>192</sup>Valik, Ferenc A., Politics of the Indian Ocean Region, pp. 180-181, The Free Press, 1976.



(4) Denial to the naval forces of the West:

"...even if American nuclear submarine deployment were minimal...the Indian Ocean does indeed constitute a logical area for (their) deployment...While it is true that the USSR does not currently possess the capability to locate and destroy enemy nuclear submarines and that the Soviet naval vessels in the Indian Ocean do not currently constitute an antisubmarine strike force, it may be assumed that Moscow is hard at work in an effort to develop such capabilities. In the meantime the Soviets are busy in the Indian Ocean laying the necessary groundwork...to maintain such a capability."<sup>193</sup>

(5) Intervention in local conflicts in support of liberation movements:

"...from a Soviet point of view, overseas capability, by the negative act(s) of confronting and preventing (and replacing) Western intervention, has enabled revolutionary forces to perform...what is regarded...as their historical function."<sup>194</sup>

Political:

(1) Influence and Prestige:

"To 'show the flag' has been a time-honored device to increase influence and prestige... To demonstrate its naval strength in a manner consistent with international law and established practices, the Soviet Union undertook to advertise its superpower status by a naval presence in waters which, prior to the mid-sixties, did not see Soviet naval vessels."<sup>195</sup>

<sup>193</sup>Smolansky, Gleg M., "Soviet Entry into the Indian Ocean: An Analysis," The Indian Ocean: Its Political, Economic and Military Importance, pp. 342-343 by Alvin M. Cottrell and R.M. Burrell (eds), Praeger Publishers, 1972.

<sup>194</sup>Jukes, Geoffery, The Soviet Union in Asia, p. 81, University of California Press, 1973.

<sup>195</sup>Valik, Politics of the Indian Ocean Region, p. 182.

(2) Internationalist mission - the Navy as a Political

Actor:

"The (Soviet) fleet's current importance as a foreign-policy instrument is not only a function of its application in periods of international tension...Since about 1969, the political strategy governing the use of military force has shifted from defense to offense. The change in strategy has led to greater naval activism in promoting as well as defending Soviet global interests...In this sense it is suggested that the Soviet Navy is not only an instrument of policy but the object of policy as well."<sup>196</sup>

(3) Political containment of China:

"The Soviet naval presence serves as a political sedative to assure these (Indian Ocean littoral) countries of Moscow's countervailing strength. Chinese negotiators, advisors, or trainers are often preferred to those of the Soviet Union. But China is unable to muster a naval presence in the Indian Ocean; it cannot match the...effect of Soviet warships in the harbors of the region."<sup>197</sup>

It seems that the broad strategic requirements of the Soviet Union are to protect economic interests in the region and to maintain a naval force which undercuts Chinese penetration, and oppose, if necessary, American missile threats. At the same time the Soviets are more than willing to take advantage of the political spin-off that such presence gains in terms of political leverage, prestige, and influence among littoral states.

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<sup>196</sup>Kelly, Anne M., "Port Visits and the 'Internationalist Mission' of the Soviet Navy," in McGwire, Michael (ed), Soviet Naval Influence: Domestic and Foreign Dimensions, p. 511, Praeger Publishers, 1977.

<sup>197</sup>Valik, Politics of the Indian Ocean Region, p. 182.

Is the Horn of Africa critical to attainment of the Soviet Union's Indian Ocean Objectives? To put it another way, would the loss of the Horn by the Soviets result in their inability to attain those objectives? To answer this question an evaluation of the importance of the Horn of Africa to each identified objective should be made.

b. Discussion:

Military:

(1) Interdiction: The geographic importance of the Horn relates to the routes through the Red Sea, not the "Cape routes." In time of war or crisis the Red Sea-Suez Canal routes would be unusable, through either Soviet action or through friendly action to seal off the Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean. Any attempt to interfere with the oil routes in a crisis situation could lead to rapid escalation of tension to conflict between the West and the Soviet Union, which would render the oil routes irrelevant. In any case, Soviet facilities at Hodeida and Basra Um Quassar are adequate, and probably better located, for interdiction missions. The Horn is not critical to attainment of this objective.

(2) Protection: The Horn's location is well suited for this mission in normal times. Soviet activity through the Red Sea and Suez can be protected by ships operating out of



ports on the Horn. During wartime, however, for the reasons mentioned above, the utility of bases on the Horn declines. It would seem that if the Soviets can protect their merchant and fishing fleets in other distant waters without benefit of land support facilities, they can do the same in the Indian Ocean. That they have done so in the past (prior to 1975) indicates that the Horn is not critical in attaining this objective.

(3) Ensuring: Having stressed the strategic advantage of the Indian Ocean to the Soviets as a link between their fleets, it would seem compelling that control of the Horn is critical to ensuring lines of communication. Thoughtful reflection, however, gives the lie to that assumption. The Suez-Red Sea route cannot be defended or maintained in time of war. One ship sunk in the Suez Canal closes off the choke point. At best this route provides the Soviets with a means for rapidly deploying forces in times of peace and low tension. Any attempt to force the canal would result in the escalating of conflict and probable closure of the waterway. The Horn is important to this objective in time of peace but not relevant in times of hostility or tension.

(4) Denial: Given the rapid improvement in weapons technology, this objective is no longer valid. Weaponry no longer requires that the Indian Ocean be used as a launch area for

ballistic missiles directed at the Soviet Union. If denial is an objective, it is political, not military in nature. Soviet control of the Horn in a nuclear war scenario would not appreciably affect the outcome, primarily because of the negative effects mentioned above on Soviet ability to reinforce Indian Ocean forces during periods of increased tension that would probably precede a nuclear war.

(5) Intervention: Of all the military objectives identified, the ability to intervene in support of liberation movements is most relevant to the Horn of Africa. The Horn itself is an example of that intervention. If Soviet intentions are to intervene in African disputes, the Horn of Africa is critical from a geographic view. The same rationale applies to involvement in potential conflicts on the Arabian Peninsula and in the Middle East. However, no appreciable strategic advantage is gained in influence over events in littoral countries to the East of the Horn. The Soviets have the capability to project power southward into India, Pakistan, Burma etc. without reliance on facilities in the Horn. The Horn is critical to intervention in Africa but not of significance to intervention in Indian Ocean states.

The relevance of the Horn of Africa to Soviet Military objectives in the Indian Ocean appears to be tenuous indeed. The political relevance is more pronounced.

Political:

(1) Influence and Prestige: The Soviet expulsion from Somalia, particularly after similar occurrences in Egypt and Sudan require that the Soviets retain a hold on the Horn or risk losing credibility, not only in the Indian Ocean, but throughout the Third World. For a superpower to be pushed around by a country of just three million souls is intolerable and some redress must be obtained. Thus, a Soviet success on the Horn, i.e. control of Ethiopia, is imperative to Soviet maintenance of influence and prestige in the Indian Ocean, Africa, and throughout the Third World.

(2) Navy as a Political Actor: Much has been made of the Soviet naval influence in the Indian Ocean. For the Soviet Navy particularly, the expulsion from their only "base" in the Indian Ocean must have been galling. Much of the Soviet effort on the Horn has undoubtedly been at the urging of naval policy makers in the Kremlin. The Navy would view the loss of the Horn much as many view the U.S. military experience in Vietnam and with serious repercussions within the Soviet leadership. If the Soviet Navy is to continue as a political actor control of the Horn is critical.

(3) Political Containment: Although not bearing directly on Sino-Soviet affairs, the Horn of Africa affords the Soviets a secure base, well outside the influence of Peking, from which to conduct operations in the Indian Ocean. The Horn has also



been an area of contested influence with both the Somalis and the Ethiopians reacting favorably to Chinese initiatives. Of perhaps more importance, the Horn again can act as a "springboard" from which to counter Chinese involvement in African nations to the south, i.e. Tanzania, Zaire, and Zambia. Although not critical to Indian Ocean objectives, a defeat on the Horn by the Chinese would bode ill for Soviet influence in Africa and the Indian Ocean.

It appears that the Horn of Africa is only peripherally important to the Soviet Union in the attainment of her Indian Ocean objectives. Although Soviet control of the Horn facilitates achieving such objectives, loss of the Horn in both political and military contexts would not negate attaining those goals. It would seem that the linkage between the Horn of Africa and Soviet objectives in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East are of more significance. It appears the Soviets feel that way as well -- at any rate it is difficult to come up with another reason for their gambling a \$100 million naval facility in order to gain entry into a country that could be landlocked in very short order.

### 3. Ideological Commitment

The Soviets have often been accused of using ideology as a rationalization after the fact in foreign policy decisions. This may have been the case in Somalia and Ethiopia. The manner in which the Soviets developed their

perception of a "client state" in Somalia has been discussed. It appeared in 1976 that Somalia could make no move without Soviet concurrence. At the same time Ethiopia's revolution was seen to shift from one oriented on social reform to an ultra-Marxist and repressive regime.

Although the Soviets did not immediately back the Ethiopians, Siad saw the writing on the wall and began to criticise Soviet actions. This was unsuccessful as by June the Dirgue had directed the expulsion of U.S. personnel mentioned earlier. The Soviets could not resist the invitation and the temptation to fill the vacuum. It may be argued that they did so on purely abstract grounds - Ethiopia is a more populous and larger country, and is more capable of supporting itself than Somalia. The prestige of Ethiopia has been greater than Somalia's in the view of other African and Third World countries.<sup>198</sup> Yet, at bottom line, it is a defensible argument that they moved in because they were obliged to do so -- wars of liberation must be supported.

Without a doubt the Soviets must have felt capable of managing their Somali "clients" regardless of Soviet actions toward Ethiopia. After all, didn't they both share the same goals? The answer was no - the Somali were not

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<sup>198</sup>Shipler, David K., "Moscow's Setback," New York Times, p. 1, 14 Nov 77.

interested in the spread of an ideology: that was a Soviet concern -- the Somalis wanted the missing territories. The Western Somali Liberation Front began their own war of liberation in the Ogaden.

The Soviets responded by increasing aid to the Ethiopians. Talks with Podgorny and Castro convinced Siad that Somali goals would have to wait so he began talking to the Saudis and the West. Soviet insensitivity to popular demands and aspirations and perhaps a bit too much opportunism resulted in their expulsion from Somalia.

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In their quest for satisfaction of their three goals on the Horn, the Soviets have not done well. They have countered U.S. involvement in the area at a time when U.S. interest seems to be at it's lowest ebb in years. They have not yet increased their capability for projecting Soviet power into the region (except for assistance direct to Ethiopia). Indeed, they have accomplished the opposite. The loss of facilities in Somalia has probably limited their capability in this regard and cannot be truly offset until a solution is reached in the Eritrean situation. They have achieved an ideological success in Ethiopia but have suffered a serious reverse in Somalia.



### C. CUBA

If doubt exists as to who engineered the intervention in Angola -- the Soviets or the Cubans -- there is no doubt about Ethiopia and the Horn. It was first and last a Soviet Show. Dimitri Simes writes:

"...the USSR was much more directly involved militarily in the Horn. The Angolan campaign could be described as a Soviet-backed Cuban exercise. In Ogaden, however, the Soviets were heavily engaged in both the planning and the implementation of operations, staying short of only the actual fighting.....None of these states (Eastern Block), and Cuba is no exception have any serious interests in the Horn of Africa. Their involvement entirely serves Soviet objectives."<sup>199</sup>

Yet, the fact remains that without the Cubans it would probably not have been possible for the Soviets to accomplish what they have done in the Horn.

Following Castro's trip to the Horn in March 1977, the first group of 50 advisors arrived in Addis Ababa, disguised as medical assistance personnel.<sup>200</sup> The numbers of Cubans increased rapidly until over 16,000 combat troops were present and involved in the fighting on the Horn. The Cuban role had changed to a direct combat function in the Ogaden by March 1978 in an attempt (successful) to bolster the failing

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<sup>199</sup>Simes, Dimitri. "Global Imperialism in the Making," Washington Review, p. 37, 1978.

<sup>200</sup>Personal observation of author,

Ethiopian Army. The Cubans have been less anxious to become involved in the Eritrean fighting although some reports indicate that they have done so.

Havana's public rationale is that there are no Cuban objectives or interests on the Horn and that the Cubans are there simply because they were asked to come by the Ethiopians. Inferences that the Cubans act as the agents of the Soviets are met with sharp denials.

"Cuba will go on giving the African liberation movements the help they need, with or without coordination with other countries. It will be according to what we decide."<sup>201</sup> (emphasis added)

Cuba's main objective seems to be the "exportation of revolution" and the sympathetic support of a progressive nation in trouble. Yet, in reality, Cuba has no interests on the Horn and virtually all of her involvement there is in pursuit of Soviet objectives.

#### D. CHINA

China's impact on events in the Horn is important even if only in the manner in which it affects the Soviet mindset. Chinese reactions with Ethiopia did not cause the Soviets any concern until 1971. Admittedly, Chou's trip in 1964 created a "ripple" in the Kremlin but because no agreements developed out of that visit, the effect was not lasting.

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<sup>201</sup>Fontaine, Roger W., "Cuba on the Horn," Washington Review, p. 43, May 78.

After the Cultural Revolution, diplomatic ties were resumed and in 1971 during the Emperor's visit to Peking a loan of \$84 million was negotiated for development projects.<sup>202</sup> Early in the revolution of 1974 the Dirgue adopted a Maoist approach to which there was no significant response by Peking until after the Dirgue began their shift to a more Soviet line.<sup>203</sup> Since the commencement of open Soviet involvement, Chinese support for Somalia has been wholehearted and anti-Soviet as might be expected.

"800 million Chinese people totally support the Somali people's just struggle for independence and national Sovereignty."<sup>204</sup>

Since a Chinese influence in Africa helped to shape the original Soviet decision to become involved in Somalia in 1963, the Soviet commitment to the Dirgue might be viewed as a counter to Peking's challenge to Soviet influence.

In 1969 the military coup was conducted by officers who had been largely trained in the Soviet Union. This pro-Soviet orientation and the Cultural Revolution resulted in a lessening

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<sup>202</sup>McLane, Charles B., Soviet African Relations, pp. 42-47, Central Asian Research Center, 1974.

<sup>203</sup>An explanation for this missed opportunity for the PRC is probably China's preoccupation with events in Angola and a mis-estimate of U.S. commitment to the Ethiopians. The Maoist rhetoric by the Dirgue may have been a factor in the Soviet decision to support them in 1976.

<sup>204</sup>Ping-nan, "Speech" in Mogadiscio on 11 Sep 77, quoted in Africa Research Bulletin, p. 4559, Africa Research limited, Vol 14, Nr. 9, 15 Oct 77.



of Soviet tension over Chinese involvement. However the Chinese continued to provide considerable aid to Somalia and in fact \$110 million for road construction in 1971 represented the second largest Chinese investment in Africa (the Tanzam Railway was the biggest). There appears to be no evidence of direct Chinese involvement or influence in Siad's decision to oust the Soviets but rhetoric of the type quoted above would indicate they wholeheartedly supported the decision.

One can assume that the PRC did not act overtly in either Ethiopia or Somalia to influence the Soviet decision to support Ethiopia, or the Somali decision to oust the Soviets. It is clear, however, that the Chinese support for Somalia's attempts to dissuade the Soviets from supporting Ethiopia probably made the decision to expell the Soviets easier.

It is obvious that the Chinese fear any Soviet success in the Indian Ocean area.

"In the Horn of Africa -- as in other parts of the Third World -- Peking sees Soviet policy in the Horn and the Red Sea as confirming its view that the 'modern stars' are pursuing a 'world hegemonic' ambition which requires the expansion of its foreign military bases, especially in the Indian Ocean littoral states. They interpret the expansion of the Soviet Navy in the region as part of a developing two-pronged naval threat to the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia -- and to China itself."<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Legum and Lee, Conflict in the Horn of Africa, p. 14.

Accordingly, one must view the Peoples Republic of China as regarding denial of influence to the Soviet Union as its primary goal on the Horn of Africa.

#### E. FRANCE AND DJIBOUTI

The newest internationally recognized independent nation in Africa, Djibouti is one of the most desolate places on earth.<sup>206</sup> It's principal resources are sand and salt and it is the smallest of the countries on the Horn. Without it's port and the railway to Addis Ababa, it would be of absolutely no consequence in affairs on the Horn and probably would have been partitioned between Ethiopia and Somalia long ago.

The port and railway were the lifeline for over 50 per cent of Ethiopia's imports and exports prior to 1974 and given the situation in Eritrea was of obvious importance if not crucial to the Ethiopians.<sup>207</sup> The fact that the preponderant ethnic group in Djibouti is of Somali origin was of some concern to both major actors on the Horn -- the Somali because of their irridentist orientation and the Ethiopians as a threat. However, as long as the French

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<sup>206</sup> See Thompson and Adloff, Djibouti and the Horn of Africa for a somewhat dated but still the best English language work on this little known region.

<sup>207</sup> Estimates made at U.S. Embassy, Addis Ababa, 1976.

occupied the territory, the Ethiopians (albeit anxious) never felt in imminent danger. As a result of that anxiety, alternate port facilities and a highway were built at Assab, in Eritrea.

At independence, granted by the French in June 1977, a bilateral agreement provided for the stationing of 4,000 Foreign Legionnaires in Djibouti to "protect the country from any external threat."<sup>208</sup> The French and the new government had successfully satisfied both Somalia and Ethiopia and forestalled a takeover by either country. It is unlikely that Djibouti would remain independent for long if the French were to leave.

All this being said, the value of the port of Djibouti has long been overrated, except as it applies to Ethiopia. The railway to the port has been interdicted by the Somali insurgents in the Ogaden and had it not been for the Emperor's foresight in building up Assab, Ethiopia might well be choking to death today.<sup>209</sup> As far as the larger strategic value is concerned, it is just as easy to cover the approaches to the Red Sea from Berbera in Somalia -- a fact the Soviets recognized in 1973: it is, however, impossible to do so from the middle of Ethiopia -- a fact driven home to the Soviets by events in Somalia.

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<sup>208</sup> Information first obtained by author in private interview in Djibouti, October 1976.

<sup>209</sup> The author was present in May 1977 when Somali insurgents cut the rail link by destroying two bridges.



Should Eritrea succeed in her bid for independence, the value of Djibouti will increase both in Somali and Ethiopian eyes and without a French presence, there is no doubt that violence and annexation attempts would take place. Fortunately, the French appear to be ready to stay for a while.

#### F. THE AFRICAN STATES

The instability in the Horn has been a matter of concern to the Organization of African Unity since the border conflicts of 1964. The OAU's attempts at mediating the disputes met with some success in the Khartoum Agreement and the Arusha Agreement of the mid-sixties. Unfortunately these initiatives were little more than stop-gap measures which never really addressed the basic causes of troubles in the Horn -- essentially a resolution of the boundary issues. The OAU has never wavered from its position of treating the Eritrean issue as a purely internal affair and the Somali issue has always been avoided by retreat behind the basic opposition, in principle, to border changes through violence.

Sudan and Kenya, both affected by events within the Horn have pursued their own interests. Both countries fear the danger of a "spillover" of conflict into their own territory and both have expressed concern about growing Soviet influence in the region.

## 1. Sudan

Sudan has always sympathised with the Eritrean cause and views the Soviet presence as the greatest threat to her integrity. Nimeiry's attempts to mediate the escalating Eritrean situation in 1976 were futile because of the intransigence of the Dirgue and the growing Soviet influence within that body. Sudanese policies shifted toward open opposition toward the Dirgue.

"(he) cannot ignore this bloody conflict which is knocking at (Sudan's) eastern gateway and dragging inside his borders the sorrows of war."<sup>210</sup>

It appears that Sudan's objectives are to prevent incursions upon her own territory while limiting Soviet influence in the Horn by encouraging the formation of an autonomous Eritrea, Muslim in nature if possible.

## 2. Kenya

Kenya views Somalia as her greatest threat. While decrying and fearing increased Soviet presence in the region, she has allowed Moscow to ship arms through Mombasa to the Ethiopians. Kenyan paranoia over Somalia's claim to the Northern Frontier District has led her to attempt to walk a tightrope. It would seem that Kenya feels capable of balancing increasing Soviet presence by escalating its own military assistance from Washington and by backing

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<sup>210</sup> Legum and Lee, Conflict in the Horn of Africa, p. 15.

Ethiopia which is seen as the most powerful regional state in the conflict. Kenya follows the OAU line with respect to Eritrea.

Kenya may be the most astute of the regional states in the line she has chosen to follow. By its very nature, Ethiopia will always be the dominant nation on the Horn. History has shown that no "occupier" or invader has ever lasted long on the Horn, they are accepted partially absorbed but always ultimately expelled. If the cycle repeats itself Kenya will be in an excellent position.

#### G. THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE PERSIAN GULF

##### 1. Israel

The Solomonid legend aside, the Israeli connection with Ethiopia goes back a long way. The first Israeli consulate was opened in Addis Ababa in 1956.

"The Israelis were (and are) convinced that the territorial and political stability of Ethiopia was the cornerstone for the stability of the entire area."<sup>211</sup>

Hailie Selassie exchanged neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict in return of technical and military assistance. However, formal ties between the Ethiopians and

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<sup>211</sup>Ledeen, Michael A., "The Israeli Connection," The Washington Review, p. 49, May 1978.



the Israelis ended in 1973 as the Emperor bowed to Black African pressure yet, informal relations continued until 1977. The "conventional wisdom" has it that the Israeli interest in Ethiopia is the prevention of Arab hegemony on the Red Sea littoral, i.e. to keep the sea lanes open -- but, there are other factors as well; Michael Ledden elucidates them:

"...(to) continue to use Ethiopia as a half-way house on the way to Kenya and South Africa; her fear of the Red Sea becoming an "Arab Lake"; her concern about growing Soviet influence, until recently centered in Somalia; ...and her antagonism to the Eritrean revolt, which was closely linked to the PLO."<sup>212</sup>

Israel's objectives therefore tend to follow the Kenyan line of "dealing with the Somalis (and Eritrean rebels) first and worry about the Soviets and Cubans later." In no wise can Israel ignore Arab victories, no matter how remotely connected or how far away. Any Arab success, no matter how small, is a much greater threat to the Israelis than a Soviet presence on the Horn. Although no doubt exists they would rather not see a Soviet presence on the Horn either.

## 2. The Arabs and the Gulf

The Arabs and the Iranians both view events on the Horn as dangerous to long term security goals in their own camps. With the majority of Arab nations as well as the Iranians involved to a greater or lesser degree in the petroleum industry, the question of greatest importance is

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<sup>212</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

the right of passage in the sea lanes. In this regard, their major common objective seems to be the preservation of at least a status quo in the Indian Ocean region, including the Horn. A second consideration by the two leading powers in the group, Iran and Saudi Arabia, seems to be a recognition that perhaps the United States cannot be depended upon when the chips are down. The major arms build up in the Persian Gulf and on the Peninsula could, in part, be traced to these two factor.

"Even before fighting erupted between Ethiopia and Somalia, the Saudia had been courting the regime in Mogadishu in an attempt to wean it away from the Soviet Union...Once fighting broke out, Saudi Arabia and other conservative regimes are believed to have served as financial backers ...for Somalia's war effort in the Ogaden...Much of the aid...would only be delivered in the case of an Ethiopian invasion into Somalia, itself and not just the retaking of the Ogaden."<sup>213</sup>

The last sentence is important. In Somalia, just as with the aid furnished to the Eritreans by the Arab states, there is just enough furnished to keep the pot boiling, but never enough to allow a decision to be reached in an all out effort. A fruitful region for further study might be the use of events on the Horn by the Arabs, Israelis, or Iranians in order to gain concessions and additional armaments from the West and other suppliers as well as to keep the superpowers in mutual confrontation.

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<sup>213</sup> Legum and Lee, Conflict in the Horn of Africa., p. 15.



It would seem that the Arabs have an interest in limited Eritrean and Somali success if for no other reason than the discomfiture it would cause the Israelis. The anti-Soviet attitude of the Arab world in general also dictates a hostile reaction to the Dirgue.

The Saudis and the Iranians have their own unique interests as well. To the Iranians it is an Indian Ocean problem and increased Soviet presence anywhere in the region is a matter of grave concern. The Shah's fear of an "Iranistanization" of his country under the Soviet Union coupled with the unrest within Iran today makes it imperative that he pursue a policy that opposes radical regimes and Soviet attempts at increasing influence in the region.

The Saudis also oppose the rise of radicalism in the area for fear of it's "spillover" effect. The Saudis also feel a religious obligation to support the predominately Muslim Somalis. In short, economic security considerations and a commitment to traditional rule, as opposed to "radical regimes" and in the case of the Saudis a religious commitment have prompted Tehran and Riyadh to become leading opponents of Soviet and Ethiopian policies on the Horn.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Having examined at length the regional actors on the Horn of Africa and to a lesser degree the influence, objectives, and interests of the external actors it is appropriate at this point to attempt to integrate these views in order to reach some conclusions about the state of affairs on the Horn and the direction they may take. The Horn has been viewed here from three perspectives: (1) internal aspects, (2) regional linkages, and (3) external influences. Each of these three viewpoints converge to form strategic considerations. It is in that fashion that this chapter will extrapolate from the inferences of this study.

### A. INTERNAL ASPECTS

None of the actors on the Horn are so secure that they are immune from internal threats. In fact, all five of the states, Ethiopia and Somalia in particular, face potentially or actually serious internal problems.

#### 1. Ethiopia

In addition to the Western Somali Liberation Front in the South and the Eritrean Liberation Front and associated group in Eritrea, the Dirgue is contending with at least four other organized liberation movements.<sup>214</sup> Soviet and Cuban assistance have enabled the Dirgue to deal fairly

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<sup>214</sup> See page 83 above for a discussion of these groups.

effectively with the Somali threat but it does not appear that great success is forthcoming in Eritrea or in the other provinces. The brutal and repressive measures taken by the Dirgue coupled with the lack of any real social change resulting from their policies ensures that armed struggle for independence and freedom from "black colonialism" will continue in the Ogaden and Eritrea. As the Dirgue continues to lose it's credibility with the people and when the people begin to see the Soviets as simply a new balabat (nobility), dissidence will increase.

## 2. Somalia

Disaffected Somali Army officers reportedly staged an attempted coup d'etat against Siad Barre's government on 9 April 1977.<sup>215</sup> Barre's success in putting it down reinforces the notion that the Somali will support a leader who appears to be effective as long as an external threat exists. In short, even though regimes may change in Somalia, the burning desire to reclaim the "lost territories" will continue to unite the Somali nation. Economic considerations may generate internal problems but if the government can continue to receive the foreign aid required to deal with the economic factors, Somalia will probably remain a relatively stable actor on the Horn. A case could be made for a resurgence of small group particularism should the "lost

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<sup>215</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. Africa Report, p. 34, Jul-Aug 78, Vol. 23.

territories" be recovered and the external threat eliminated thereby, however, that is not a likely occurrence in the middle run, due to external involvement in the neighboring countries.

### 3. The Other States on the Horn

Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya all have potential problems of internal stability. Djibouti should remain stable as long as the French maintain their presence there. Should the French troops leave, and should Eritrea continue to be successful in her bid for independence, then Djibouti will almost certainly become a causus belli for renewed conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia.

The greatest threat to Sudan and Kenya is the "spill-over" effect that could come about as a result of combat in Eritrea or the Ogaden. Should Ethiopia begin to support the dissident Ansar groups in Southern Sudan or, the Somalis the inhabitants of the Northern Frontier District in an attempt by either country to influence the regional policies of Sudan or Kenya, serious threats to the stability of the present regimes could result. As long as the differences between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia are kept within their own borders Kenya and Sudan should be capable of maintaining internal stability.

### B. REGIONAL LINKAGES

The Horn of Africa represents a mini-international system which is essentially bi-polar in nature and seeking equilibrium.



The factors of geography, religion and social development have combined to create two opposing cultures which are in a struggle for dominance. The Horn is not a simple ideological battleground, nor is it a purely territorial dispute. The roots go deeper -- to things which are primordial -- the factors of race, religion, kinship, and custom all weigh heavily in the equation. It can be said with a fair degree of certainty that regional tensions and conflicts will exist on the Horn until equilibrium is achieved -- until Eritrea is independent or conquered and the Somali gain their lost territory or lose their national identity.

Considering the degree of internal discontent within the actors, the serious economic and social problems which exist and the factors of poverty, rising expectations and an increasing modernization gap, all of which have been exacerbated by the severity of recent drought and warfare, it is unlikely that the Horn of Africa can overcome the imbalance caused by external actors to achieve that equilibrium in the foreseeable future.

#### C. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

The superimposition of ideology upon the already deep and serious primordial cleavages extant on the Horn has accelerated the rate of change. Historically, great events in the region have been precipitated by external

actors. The Horn has tended to absorb what it can digest from the intruder, but ultimately rejects the remainder. The Arabs, Portugese, Egyptians, Italians and most recently the Americans, are examples.

The external actors involved today also contribute to the deepening and in some cases creation of cleavages within the region. If the historical trend holds true the Soviet Union will be no exception and will find that she is a little more than the Horn can effectively digest. In the wake of the Soviet departure there will remain old and new wounds which must be healed if the Horn is ever to achieve it's normal balance.

#### D. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The Horn of Africa does have strategic value, both in a geopolitical and an ideological sense. It's geopolitical significance is marginal with respect to the Indian Ocean but great in terms of its use as a "spring board" into other regions. The second major point that surfaces in this analysis is that no one, except the Soviets and perhaps the Dirgue, really desires a Soviet presence on the Horn. Given the apparent future course of events in Africa, particularly the south, and the increasing paranoia of the Arab world regarding Soviet intentions, it seems likely that the Horn will continue to be a troubled spot in the



world. A solution to the Middle East problem could result in two strategies developing on the Horn -- Soviet-Ethiopian and the rest of the World's.

It would seem to the author that it would be a far better thing for the Soviets to bear the burden of a fragmenting and contentious Ethiopia while the United States extends it's hand to the perhipheral states. Not in the sense of establishing an American presence but rather in the sense of moral and economic support. When the ultimate equilibrium is achieved and the Soviets have gone the way of all other intruders on the Horn, we would be in a far better position to assist in the development of that "natural economic unit" envisioned by Menelik II nearly a century ago.



APPENDIX A  
THE SOLOMONID LEGEND

1. Biblical Version

"And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord she came to prove him with hard questions.

And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

And Solomon told her all her questions: there are not anything hid from the King, which he told her not.

And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

...And she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices such as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."<sup>126</sup>

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2. Ethiopian Continuation

"And he (the king) paid her great honor and rejoiced. ...After six months stay, the Queen wanted to return to her kingdom. By a trick he slept with her, and during the

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<sup>216</sup>I Kings X: 1-10.

same night she dreamt that a brilliant sun, and it came down from heaven and shed exceedingly great splendor over Israel. ...it suddenly withdrew itself and flew away to Ethiopia and it shone there with exceeding great brightness forever, for it willed to dwell there. The King understood that he would have a child (from her) and gave her a ring saying 'Take so that thou mayest not forget me. And if it happen that I obtain seed from thee, this ring shall be unto it a sign; and if it be a man child he shall come to me...and she brought forth a man child...Menelik, and when he grew up, he went to Jerusalem to visit his father. King Solomon received him with great honor and urged his son to stay in Jerusalem 'where the house of God is, and where the Tabernacle of the Law of God is, and where God dwelleth'. Menelik refused and decided to return to his home-country, Ethiopia... King Solomon made him King and gave him the first born sons of Israel to go with him to Ethiopia. On their departure they stole the real Ark of the Covenant and took it with them. According to the Ethiopian oral tradition, at that time Judaism was introduced to Ethiopia and the Ark of the Covenant which was given to Moses by God, is believed to be still in existence to day in Axum, the Sacred City of the Ethiopians. It is firmly believed here in Ethiopia that the Dynasty which was started by King Menelik I still continues today in Ethiopia (1972)."<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval History, pp. 37-38.



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